YOUTH NEWSLETTER

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION/YOUTH DESK No. 19 June 1986

Champakanda tribal village in India, visited by LWF Youth Team, March 1986

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E D I T O R I A L

> There are different kinds of gifts
> but the same spirit. There are different
> kinds of service but the same Lord.
> There are different kinds of working
> but the same God works all of them
> in all men.
> 1.Cor. 12:4-6

The question that occupies many of us, and a complaint often raised by young people, probably in all parts of the world is: why does the church not open up to us young people, when is the time going to come when we will be able to feel that our questions are not a burden, our vitality does not disturb, our songs can be sung along with those of the old hymns in our congregation? A lot of people and also many leaders of the churches know that every church, every congregation should meet the expectations and needs of all age groups so that God's Grace can come to all of them and they can all create an active, sensitive, responsible family of the same Spirit, Father and Son, our God.

I must confess that this is always something I think of when a new issue of our newsletter is being prepared. Let us look for an answer to the question of what we from our standpoint can do, from the point of view of us young people, raised in Christian families or stopped somewhere on our way through this world by a message from the living God. What can we do in order to help our churches to be more open to searching, asking, critical, sometimes impatient, young people, who would like to find a home, real brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles and fathers and mothers, where there are so many gifts but the same Spirit, so many services but only one Lord? What should be our procedure as young members of the congregations who generally have no influence on the decisions of the responsible church bodies, but still have so many gifts given to us for our common benefit? To look for positive answers coming from different parts of the LWF to these questions, is also an important task of this humble instrument, our Youth Newsletter.

Do you have some positive answers? Do you know of situations where the gifts of young Christians helped the congregation? If you remember some specific case, or if you know somebody who would be able to report about his/her way to use the gifts given to them, please also let other members of our Lutheran family praise our Lord for it when reading your story. Please let your experiences be used for the encouragement of many others, report on your sorrows, struggles and victories, all of which take place under the same Lord of our churches and our world. We would be pleased to make it possible through our Youth Newsletter.

Maybe you already know that at the beginning of May there was a meeting of the LWF Commission of Church Cooperation in Caracas/Venezuela. The meeting did not only have a business part with decisions to be made on the program of the department and also of our youth desk, but there was also an interesting theme given to the meeting, and this was: Urban mission.

I would like to report to you on one part of the presentation, given by representatives of the American Lutheran Churches working in different parts of mission in big cities in the United States. A highlight in this very interesting presentation was a contribution by a young sister, Marilyn Miller, of the Cross Lutheran Church (AELC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, coming from an Afro-American background. She told us in an impressive and convincing way the story of her congregation.

Originally it was German, later English-speaking, but still faithful to the same liturgical tradition, serving the same ethnic group. The first step of a new development was made when the first black child was accepted in the school sponsored by the church. The prophetic voice in the congregational meeting, dealing with this matter, said: "Well, if we believe the Gospel, what else can we do but accept the child." After that Afro-American families gradually joined the congregation, bringing their different church traditions with them. A young choir was established in 1969, singing various types of music. This group brought a new life to the worship and it was an other important new step. The choir served the congregation regularly and many people started to ask for more songs to be sung during worship by the whole community and not only by the youth because the songs were simply beautiful. There were many changes in the style of the worship, but, what is very important too, also in the whole ministry of the congregation for the people living in the area.

Whose work was it? It is clear that it was only the one Spirit working in the church, the same Lord, but without any doubts the important thing was that all the gifts were used. Young people did not wait until somebody invited them and granted them all the necessary rights, they came with their gifts to serve the same Lord. That is what I understand. It is only a pity that I cannot report about it with the same joy and hope as Marilyn Miller did in Caracas.

But I very much hope that there will be many more convincing stories like this one, which we will be able find in this and other issues of our Youth Newsletter, also with your help and your contributions.

Yours,

Julius

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NOTES FROM OUR DESK

- The LWF Commission of Church Cooperation held its annual meeting in Caracas, Venezuela April 30 - May 6. In a working part of the meeting the reports of the different desks were submitted and discussed. The outline of the program of the Youth Desk and proposals for the activities for 1987 were endorsed by the CCC. The list of activities contains sponsorship of a Latin American Youth Gathering, Asian Youth Gathering, Caribbean Youth Gathering, European Consultation on spirituality (joint Youth Desk/Department of Studies activity) and other ongoing work (as Youth Newsletter, Youth Internship Program...) The reports on the Asian team visit and the Central American Lutheran Youth Gathering in Honduras were received with appreciation and it was agreed to continue with the youth exchange program as outlined in the Youth Coordinator's report.

- May 7-18, 1986 the Youth Coordinator visited the Lutheran Church of America headquarters in Philadelphia, New York, the Lutheran World Ministries in New York and Coinonia Community in N.Y., which belongs to the American Lutheran Church. The purpose of the meetings was to deepen the cooperation with American Lutheran youth work. New ways of using the experiences of the American Lutheran churches in their youth work for other churches of the federation are being discussed now.

- The Youth Desk will be involved in the following meetings in the coming months:

  A Christian Youth Meeting on South Africa in Harare from July 1-7. The Youth Desk will be represented through Ellen Martha Blaasvaer (youth intern in the Department of Studies);

  The National Assembly of Lutheran Youth in Ystad, Sweden from August 4-10. The Youth Coordinator will attend this meeting with representatives of Lutheran youth in Sweden and the Assembly itself;

  September 22-26 there will be a preparatory meeting of the 1987 Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering in Jerusalem.

- Activities in preparation:

  A joint World Service/Youth Desk consultation on the "Role of the Youth in the human and natural resources development", which will be held from December 1-7 in Kuala Lumpur with 56 participants;

  A Latin American Youth Gathering (planned for January-February 1987 - but still without definite date and venue - the Youth Desk is waiting for the decision of member churches in the region);

  An Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering in June-July 1987 (exact dates till to be chosen) in Jerusalem. Letters asking for reactions to the general outline of the theme: "Confessing in the Asiatic Context" were sent to all Asian churches. We are waiting for reactions from individuals and youth groups that would help us in the preparatory process.

Youth Internship Program

In the year 1987 we would like to accept interns (altogether three, each for a half year period) preferably from Eastern Europe (so far we had no one in the LWF), South America, Africa or North America. Each applicant should have an endorsement from the leadership of his/her church and must respond to the rules published in our Youth Newsletter, Issue Nr. 16, October 1984. Please, send endorsed applications as soon as possible to the Youth Desk.

The LWF Department of Studies is urgently looking for a youth intern (as usual under the age of 30) with the following qualifications:

- demonstrated ability to carry on research individually;
- background knowledge of ecumenical theology and the place of BEM in it;
- reading skill in both English and German (technical, theological language), French also desirable;
- fluency in writing English or German on the level of technical theology;
- completion of basic theological study (e.g. First Exam in Germany, M. Div. in USA;
- under 30 years of age;

to work for four to six months this year, analysing Lutheran church responses to the Lime Document, Baptism eucharist, Ministry and preparing a report on that analysis. The work will be done in the Strasbourg Institute. An application should be sent to the Youth Desk, endorsed by the leadership of the church. We are publishing this announcement for the second time now - still waiting for an applicant!

Publications

- "The Future is Now" publication was reprinted after a growing demand, especially from the USA and Canada. We still have free copies for you;
- we can send to you free of charge also the following publications, produced by the Lutheran Church of America:

  1. Youth group handbook
  2. Exciting ideas for youth ministry
  3. Helping youth grow in faith
  4. Some recent issues of the newsletters:

     a) Lutheran Youth, World Hunger
     b) Network

- The American Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, 422 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414, USA could send you the following:

  1. "Faith prisals" - youth devotions for every day of the year made by 14 youth writers

  2. "Songs for a new creation" - hymnbook for young people with 149 songs

  3. Series for leaders and groups:

     a) "Decisions for life"
     b) "The Image"

Youth Newsletter Address Update

NAME.....

☐ 1. I have a CHANGE OF ADDRESS. My new address is:

.....

.....

.....(Please write legible)

☐ 2. Please DISCONTINUE sending the Youth Newsletter to me

☐ 3. Please ADD THESE PEOPLE to your mailing list.
(Use other sheets if necessary)

Name.....

Address.....

Name.....

Address.....

Please return to: LWF Youth Desk, P.O. Box 55, Route de Ferney 150,
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

BIBLE STUDY

by Marilyn J. Fowlie, Canada

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY
"Caring for Our Neighbour"

Objectives

1. Participant(s) will realize that society is made up of people who are their neighbours.

2. Participant(s) will realize that as Christians we are called and commanded to care for our neighbour.

3. Participant(s) will realize that participation in society (caring for our neighbour) covers a diverse assortment of activities.

* *

Notes

- The study is geared towards a group rather than an individual, but an individual could use it.

- If used for a large group split up into smaller groups for the discussion and questions and then return to the large group to report the small groups findings.

- If it is a large group the leader might want to do part "C" first and then split the group into two groups. One group doing part "B" and one doing part "D" and then have the two groups report back to each other what they discovered.

A) INTRODUCTION

As we begin this Bible study we do not ask if youth can participate, rather, we begin by asking how they can participate.

The first question that comes to my mind is "What is society?"

1. Take some time to discuss what you think society is.

2. Look up the dictionary meaning of the word (Webster's New World Dictionary states that society is "all people, collectively").

3. Who are all these people that make up society?

4. Could all these people be called our neighbours? Why or Why not?

B) THE FAITHFUL NEIGHBOUR - Luke 10:25-37

1. Who was the neighbour in need in this parable? What was his need?

2. Who was the neighbour who responded to this need? How did he respond?

3. Who is your neighbour? Can someone living on the opposite side of the world be your neighbour?

4. How can you respond to your neighbour's need?

5. How can your neighbour respond to your need?

6. What needs can you see in your own home? in your community? in your country? in the world?

Optional: Put this parable into a modern situation and act it out.

C) CALLED AND COMMANDED

> "It is also taught among us that good works should and must be done, not that we are to rely on them to earn grace but that we may do God's will and glorify him. It is always faith alone that apprehends grace and forgiveness of sin. When through faith the Holy Spirit is given the heart is moved to do good works." (Augsburg Confession, Article XX)

As Christians we are called and commanded to care for our neighbour. Throughout scripture the message reaches out to motivate us to action (Deut. 5:166-21; Lev. 19:18; Mt. 5:16, 44; Mk. 12:31; Gal. 5:14; James 2:17-18, 4:17; I Pet. 2:12)

On the attached page there are some pictures, let everyone look at them.

1. Which picture or pictures do you think show a Christian participating in society? If none of these pictures seem to fit your idea, draw a picture of your own.

2. Why did you pick that picture.

3. Did you all pick or draw the same picture?
   If NO - What does this imply?
   If YES - Do you believe that there is only one way for a Christian to be active in society?

4. As a group come up with as many different ways to participate in society as you can. If your group is large split into smaller groups and have each group report back to the large group.

D) THE HESITANT PARTICIPANT - Esther 4:1-17

1. What was going to happen to the Jews?

2. When Mordecai sought Esther's aid what was her first answer?

3. Why do you think she answered that way?

4. Have you ever felt the same as Esther when asked to do something you thought was too difficult a task?

5. Mordecai told Esther that perhaps she was put where she was for the very purpose of saving the Jews (v. 14). Could God have put you where you are for a purpose?

6. Mordecai believed that salvation would come whether or not Esther helped and further on in the book his hope is fulfilled. Do you have this same trust that God is in control?

7. Did Esther do what she was called to do? Do you do what you are called to do?

Optional: Put this story into a modern situation and act it out.

E) CLOSING & PRAYER

1. Sing a song

2. Close in group prayer or individual prayer.

Optional: Group Prayer - each individual ends their prayer "Lord, in your mercy" and the group responds "Hear our Prayer";
- End the prayer time with the request that God hear our spoken and silent prayers so that the prayers of those too shy to pray aloud are not forgotten.

3. Some things to pray for:
- thanksgiving that God has made us his children;
- that God would show each of us how and where to participate in society (care for our neighbour);
- some petitions from the "Small Catechism in Prayer form" (10 Commandments. 4th - 10th Commandments);
- for the individual needs of your group;
- for the needs you see in your neighbours - the neighbours close and the neighbours far away.

F) SOME OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. As a group make a collage of pictures showing ways of participation in society. Draw the pictures yourself or cut them from magazines. Take time to explain why you picked that picture as you glue them onto a large sheet.

2. The 4th thru 10th Commandments relate to our relationship with our neighbour. Looking at our Small Catechism apply these commandments and their explanations to yourself as a neighbour.

3. Discover some other people in the Bible that God used to achieve his purposes: Daniel, Moses, Gideon, Deborah, Joshua, Rahab, etc.

INTRODUCTION - YOUTH INTERN

As a youth intern in LWF, I was invited to introduce myself to the readers of this Newsletter.

My name is Ellen Martha Blaasvaer, I am 23 years old, married and I come from Norway. I am studying theology at the Free Faculty in Oslo. I am now taking a break from my studies in order to spend four months in the Geneva Women's Office as a youth intern.

To be quite frank, I did not know very much about LWF's activities before I came to Geneva. I look upon my stay here as a great chance to meet people from Lutheran churches from all over the world and to learn about the richness and agonies which worldwide cooperation means. I do hope that I may also get a brief introduction to the ecumenical movement, since working in the Ecumenical Center offers a possibility to meet people from the World Council of Churches and other organizations in this building. I believe that the work of LWF and the ecumenical efforts in which we take part, are a must for the Christian churches. In spite of all the difficulties it may provide, I believe that this work is blessed by God - because it is in the name of Jesus Christ, who prayed that we all might be one.

The aspect of the work which is closest to my heart here in LWF and in my home church in Norway, is the struggle of including women in the church on all levels. In most local churches, women are the pillars of the congregations, but in most places we still have far to go before women and men can take part in service and worship on equal terms.

Nobody would ever propose to create a special office to take care of men's interests in a world-organization, and this reflects how men automatically are included on all levels of the work. Unfortunately, it is not the same with women. They still need their advocates to make sure that their needs and interests are not ignored and to prevent women from becoming invisible again, as so often before.

During the few weeks I have been at the Women's Office, I have read and heard of women in churches in different parts of the world, who through their writings, sermons, prayers and service give me hope for the future. They make me believe that one day, Christianity can be expressed in an inclusive language, and that women and men can serve God and people on equal terms.

STARTING POINT: A NEW PHILOSOPHY ON YOUTH

by Emily Demuth, LWF Department on Communication

The involvement of youth in the work of the Lutheran World Federation, and for us particularly in the department of communication, is important and attempts have been made to further this participation. Not all attempts at youth participation have been entirely successful. Perhaps we need to re-examine our approach to youth involvement, to see whether it is being approached in the best way possible.

One must first determine what it is that makes youth a special group -- what makes them different from the rest of the federation. I consider myself a youth, and believe I have discovered that quality, which is seemingly not emphasized in LWF work.

Youth are special because they are often not yet fully integrated into the economic and political systems of their home country and the world. Until they begin to work and come of voting age, they are somewhat removed from direct contact with these systems, and have the potential to critique from the outside. They also lack the knowledge of the complexities of the system, which make them more open to try new things. Too often people simply say, "This can't be done in this way because this is not the way the system works." But because youth do not know how the system works, they may have suggestions, ideas and enthusiasm which a knowledgeable person would not have.

John, Taylor, general secretary of the World Conference on Peace and Religion, when talking about youth camps run by his organization, said that youth have the frankness to ask important questions about different religions, and the boldness to answer them with honesty -- something theologians are still struggling to do.

But, one may contend, youth always buy into the system in the end. Of course they do, because they are offered no alternative. When they have simple enthusiastic ideas and want to see something happen, their ideas are quickly squelched by adults -- "Don't count on it. The system doesn't work that way." Youth involvement often means bringing youth into the system and making adults of them. The result is not really youth participation, but young people assimilated into the adult world.

The church is often compared with a family. In families, each person has a specific role. One does not expect the parents to go to kindergarten, anymore than one expects the children to provide all the family income. Even so in the church, we should not expect the youth to play the same role as the adults. If we do, we lose an important element. Youth must contribute as youth, but must contribute to the whole church. Although it is important to have events and publications geared specifically for youth, I think we should also have programs designed for allowing youth to address the whole church.

What would happen if youth were offered an alternative? If they were allowed to address the church as youth, telling of their hopes and dreams for the future? Youth want to make the world a better place, but how can they if they are only given a voice once they have become a part of a faulty system?

A small white child will gladly play with a black child, until their mother or father says "you can't play with her anymore." American children do not know that there is anything "wrong" with Russians until they are told that all Communists are bad. A girl will not know there is anything wrong with her serving God in the ordained ministry until it gets pounded into her head that she can't.

Christ told us that unless we have "faith like a child," we cannot enter the kingdom of God. I think that part of this faith like a child is the openness and willingness to accept all people, and to ignore the beliefs society imposes on us. What if the church received the openness and naiveté of youth as positive contributions to the world? Could we bring up a generation who remained "in the world but not of it?" Who remained in childlike faith? Who ignored the political and ethnic divisions of the world? Who were willing to criticize and improve things, instead of taking it as the way the system works?

Johannes der Theologe, im Schweigen

ZAGHAFTE FORTSCHRITTE ERKENNBAR

Advisory Committee (Beratungsausschuss) für das LWB-Frauenreferat tagte in Genf - Bericht von Sabine Rüdiger-Hahn

Es kommt mir so vor, als würden wir noch immer am Anfang stehen: Die "Frauenfrage" wartet noch immer auf ihre Lösung oder wenigstens erkennbare Fortschritte. Die 7. Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes in Budapest hat sich auf eine Reihe von Forderungen verständigt, die es gilt bei der 8. und dann an allen weiteren Vollversammlungen einzulösen. Das würde bedeuten, dass zur 8. Vollversammlung bereits 40% der Delegierten und ab der 9. 50% Frauen sein sollten, sowie dem Exekutivkomitee und den Kommissionen 40% Frauen und 40% Männer angehören müssen.

Gunnar Staalsett, Weltbund-Generalsekretär, hat kürzlich dazu festgestellt, dass die gegenwärtige Situation noch nicht zufriedenstellend ist, wenngleich zaghafte Fortschritte doch erkennbar sind. Der in Budapest ausgeworfene Samen muss wohl erst noch aufgehen.

Vom 20.-24. Januar 1986 traf sich unter Leitung von Eva von Hertzberg das Advisory Committee (Beratungsausschuss) für das LWB-Frauen-Referat zu seiner ersten Arbeitssitzung in Genf. Ich selbst gehöre diesem Advisory Committee als "Youth representative" an. Dies hört sich gewaltig an und droht vor allem dann zu einer Ueberforderung zu werden, wollte man von mir erwarten, dass ich für a l l e jungen Frauen spreche. Was ich tun kann, sind zwei Dinge: Zum einen werde ich in diese Arbeit meine Erfahrungen aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und besonders aus Bayern einfliessen lassen. Zum anderen möchte ich aber darüberhinaus an dieser Stelle junge Frauen in den Mitgliedskirchen des Weltbundes ermutigen und bitten, den Kontakt mit mir zu suchen bzw. direkt mit Genf aufzunehmen. Denn nur wer informiert ist, kann auch sinnvolle Entscheidungen treffen. Das schliesst selbstverständlich den ständigen Kontakt mit dem LWB-Jugendreferat mit ein, in dessen "Youth Newsletter" sich von Zeit zu Zeit Beiträge aufgenommen werden könnten. Ein wichtiges Forum für die Frauenarbeit bleibt nachwievor "Women", eine Zeitschrift, die Eva von Hertzberg für die Studienabteilung herausgibt.

Bei unserem ersten Treffen in Genf haben wir uns darauf verständigt, dass für unsere Arbeit die Empfehlungen der LWB-Vollversammlung aus Budapest, die Ergebnisse der Frauenkonferenz von Nairobi und Berichte von Ausschussmitgliedern über die jeweilige Situation von Frauen in ihrem Land oder Kontinent mit die Grundlage bilden. Aus einer Vielzahl von Vorhaben will ich nur die folgenden herausgreifen: Sammeln und Aufarbeiten von Informationen über die Partizipationsmöglichkeiten von Frauen in den Mitgliedskirchen des Weltbundes. Vorbereitung eines Treffens von Frauendelegierten vor der nächsten Vollversammlung. Unterstützung von Initiativen zu einer besseren Qualifizierung von Frauen, um Mitwirkungsmöglichkeiten zu erschliessen und zu sichern, vor allem in Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika. Zur Vorsitzenden des Advisory Committees wurde Gunvor Lande aus Norwegen gewählt.

Zum Abschluss unseres Treffens in Genf sind wir übereingekommen, den Kontakt untereinander über Länder und Kontinente hinweg durch ein Gebet (jeden Donnerstag) zu halten und unsere Vorhaben in dieses Gebet mit hineinzunehmen.

TAIZE: WORLD WIDE YOUTH GATHERING AT MADRAS

Report written by Caleb Santhosam from Malaysia (ELCM), whose participation at the Madras meeting was sponsored by the LWF Youth Desk.

This worldwide youth gathering under the theme, "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth" in Madras was prepared by the Taizé Community at the invitation of the Bishop responsible for Catholic Youth in India, of the Church of South India and of the Orthodox Churches in Madras. It is said that these brothers of Taizé have been involved a year and a half in preparing the meeting at Madras. The Taizé Community, situated in a village in France is an ecumenical group (of Lutherans, Catholics and Anglicans), who are well know for their work with youth and the poor all over the world. Their message of reconciliation and peace with God is their main theme which is found in their chant like songs.

Program

The program commenced firstly with all the foreign participants being assigned to a 10 day live-in with parishioners in the State of Kerala. Most of these parishioners were not wealthy but lived in poverty. But even so their hospitality and sharing was done with such a wholeness of heart.

The program proper lasted five days. It started on the 26th of December with the registration and on the 27th of December at 5 pm the evening worship marked the start of the meeting. Brother Rogers, the founding member of the Taizé Community was present to share in the morning and evening worships. It was here that I had my first hand experience of the Taizé form of worship and heard the messages for the pilgrimage. On the whole the meeting was a new experience for me. Though the meeting can be divided into the worship and the discussion group, for me the worship was the most attractive. The worship was sanctified with the simple songs or chant-like songs (bhajaus as they were known) which was taught to us. Other than the songs being inspiring and enriching, the short message by Brother Rogers on Trust, calling to be forgiving and dependent on God were apt and timely in the light of the increasing violence and the apparent hopeless state of affairs in the world.

Furthermore the presence of the over 10,000 participants from so many countries helped me to get a better view of the churches around the world. By just conversing with them I found that the different problems faced in my country were quite similar to theirs. I was able to share my experience and they about their struggles and success in being involved in the church ministries. In doing so both learned from each other. Twice a day in Madras, all the participants gathered for discussion and sharing in small groups.

The daily themes could be a continuing basis for reflection (in parishes, congregations, schools, group..) as the pilgrimage continues. Some of the themes were:

"Will you take your place among those women, men and children who have decided to act?"

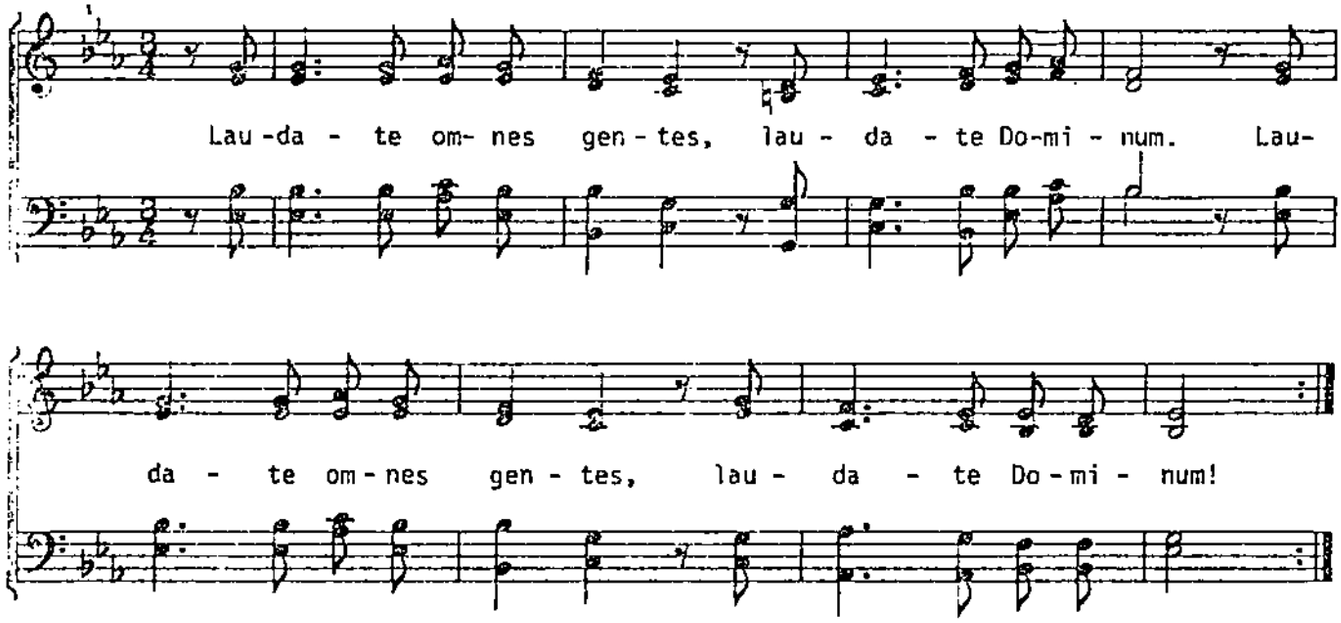
"Do we not realize? God wants us to be creators with him."

"Through the yes of faith, the yes of trust in God, the risen Christ makes you fully alive."

"Do you realize that wherever there is forgiving love, God's presence is almost tangible?"

In summary I have to agree that the "Pilgrimage of Trust" was indeed a unique occasion for me to learn from others and experience the needs of trust and hope.

Psalm 117:1 Music from Taizé, France **32**



All peoples, praise the Lord!
Louez le Seigneur, tous les peuples!
Lobet alle Völker, lobet den Herrn!
¡Pueblos todos alabad al Señor!

STRIKING FATES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Report on "First Central American Encounter of Young Lutherans for Peace" in Honduras - by Laurel Hayes, USA

I have recently returned from Honduras, where I was sent by the Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran World Ministries as the U.S. observer at the "First Central American Encounter of young Lutherans for Peace" during the Holy Week 1986. At the encounter were delegations from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico. Nicaragua was invited to send a delegation, but decided not to do so after being informed by the Honduran government that the delegates would be accompanied by an armed guard. There were also observers from the USA, Switzerland and (briefly) West Germany.

The majority of the 140 delegates were under 25, but at least 30 older adults were there and actively participated. Lutherans predominated, but the Honduran Catholics for Peace sent a delegation, as did two Honduran development agencies, CODIMQA (Council for the Integral Development of the Peasant Woman) and EDUCSA (Community Education for Health). Some were middle class, other were peasants. It was with tremendous excitement that I watched the lodge fill on Monday evening with this motley crew. It somehow seemed appropriate that our first action was to applaud God.

Our meeting ground was Bet-El, a Christian summer camp 45 minutes outside the capital city of Tegucigalpa. My impression o being in several different worlds at once was heightened by Bet-El which, with its dirt paths and pines and vistas of mountains hazy in the distance, reminded me of the Vermont camp where I spent so many summers. Wihakowi, however, never had US helicopters buzzing overhead.

Our schedule was ambitious. We rose at 5:30, shivering in line for cold showers. Each morning, a different delegation prepared a chapel service before breakfast. Our first morning session began (theoretically) at 8:30 with a lecture on the economic, political, historical and social realities of Central America. After the presentation, the assembly would divide into twelve small groups to discuss questions posed by the lecturer. Each group then presented its conclusions to the reconvened assembly. Group presentations engendered much heated argument and often exceeded their scheduled time. Free time after lunch saw impromptu volleyball and soccer games, people gathering around a guitar and tired delegates sneaking off for a siesta. Afternoon session often continued the morning's debate before going on to a presentation by one of the overseas observers. After a brief break, we would gather for Bible study. The discussion process was often similar to the morning routine: small groups working through the leader's queries, then each group presenting its conclusions to the larger assembly. After dinner came an evening program: cultural presentations by each delegation, a dance, a protest song competition, a campfire. The routine was broken Friday morning when we visited Tegucigalpa, and Saturday when a joint statement and a summary of presentations and discussions by the delegations for their respective audiences were drawn up.

Honduras report contd.

North Americans usually get their information on Central America from other North Americans. My first night in Honduras, a delegate remarked that it is uncommon for a North American to be willing to listen and learn; that most North Americans assume they know everything, the Central Americans know nothing and that the Central Americans are doing everything wrong. It is essential that we in the U.S. hear the voices of the people living to the South.

Two ideas surfaced again and again, and unlike some of the other conclusions, seemed to be unanimous. One is that there can be no peace until children no longer starve to death. The fundamental violence in Central America is structural and consists of a system which does not allow the majority of people a livelihood. The other is that each nation has a right to self-determination. The U.S. presence in the region makes a mockery of that right. In the final assembly, the delegates called for an end to US aid to the contras and to the Salvadoran government.

Concern was voiced for the environment, which delegates felt was being abused by the corporate and military presence in the region. The global arms race was condemned as endangering everyone by increasing the risk of nuclear war and by impoverishing society. The assembly voiced the conviction that much of the church, the educational system and the media are mediums of a cultural invasion which disempowers people, discouraging critical thought and efforts for change. A call was issued for peace with justice.

The week was comprised of three components. The intensive seminar and the usual summer camp activities complemented each other well. What seemed jarringly out-of-place, especially in the idyllic setting of Bet-El, was the reality of the wars in Central America. Sometimes in program, more often in conversations during free time, I heard stories of events which never should have happened. Much of the following are these stories.

Friday morning, in a park in Tegucigalpa overlooking the city: A Honduran friend grabs my arm and points outward. "Do you see that building?", he asked. "That's the seat of our government. It is the U.S. embassy."

Tuesday morning, small discussion group: In what is to be the first of many times this is brought up during the week, Teresa mentions with horror the sexual abuse of children by US marines in Comayagua -- allegations which have everyone in an uproar. By the end of the week, a paper with a union seal appears on the bulletin board, enumerating the incidents of this abuse and strongly condemning them.

Wednesday morning, full assembly: An older Honduran man rises, angrily stating that his country is occupied by unfriendly forces -- the US military and the contras.

Monday morning, first lecture: Lecturer Reina states that the presence of foreign troops on Honduran soil has not brought about their stated intent: the overthrow of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. However, the profound societal divisions at every level in Honduras concerning this presence has led to the downfall of three Honduran governments. Murmurs of shock and assent in the assembly.

Honduras report contd.

Friday afternoon during break: A 20-year-old Honduran sits down next to me near the volleyball court. He is earnest, seldom smiles, speaks at length. He tells of growing up poor near the Salvadoran border, of his early attachment to the Catholic church. Priests recognized his abilities and just out of childhood, he became a Delegate of the Word and a youth organizer. He alternated this work for God with work in factories to support his ailing mother. The priests who trained him worked with unions, student groups, women's groups and other such organizations. Their work was seen as subversive by the Honduran government, which exiled one priest and imprisoned the other. The latter priest had been released, but was rearrested and tortured this winter. He was released again in short order because peasants followed the troops that were holding him, and because of a massive outcry on the part of the people. Another Catholic for Peace which whom I spoke confirms the arrest and the outcry, but is unsure about the torture. My companion had been arrested himself, but was not jailed for long because of his youth. While in jail, he was given neither food nor water. Before freeing him, his captors beat him, "A warning", they said.

Driving into town Friday, Pedro lets out a shout in the back seat. A man is spreadeagled against the wall, being searched by two soldiers with machine guns. Down the street, another soldier is lunging toward a woman. When I mention the incident to Carlos, he dismisses it. "Here, they're just shaking the peasants down for money. In El Salvador, it would be serious."

Discussion group, Wednesday: Teresa, a woman in her forties with hair pulled back in a ponytail and a lovely smile, mentions Guadeloupe Carney, the priest who, on expulsion from Honduras for his work with the peasants, declared himself a chaplain to the Honduran guerrillas. Evidence indicates that he and his companions were tortured to death with the help of the US military soon after entering Honduras. I ask her and an older Honduran campesino with a lined, bronzed face about him during break. He is well-known and remembered among the peasants, but it is extremely dangerous even to mention his name. A foreign nun in Teresa's town was caught with a copy of his book and expelled from the country.

Jolting over back roads in the jeep, Friday morning: An animated discussion with the head of the women's development agency. Maria is striking: petite, vivacious, with a mass of dark hair pulled back from her face. She looks 24, but is in fact 32, and is raising a 5-year-old son on her own. Her husband left her when she was one month pregnant. She is from the countryside, but now travels all over Honduras, training health promoters and conducting seminars. As we pull into Tegucigalpa, she points out her house in the slums. Because of her travels, her son lives with her mother in another town. She sees him when she can. She tells me of her organization, which trains campesinas to go door-to-door, teaching their neighbors preventative health measures, sanitation, basic nutrition and medicinal uses of herbs. As most Hondurans have no access to health care, these women are performing a vital service. It is not always safe to do so, however. There is one region of the country, Santa Barbara, where the women are too afraid to organize. Most of Maria's colleagues are also single mothers. Traditionally, men control the actions of their wives and children. Maria remarks with bitterness that the only reason peasant men marry is

Honduras report contd.

for sex. If their wives are active outside the home, they grumble. Women taking control of their own lives has led to divorces among members of her group. There are some women, like European feminists of the last century, who are refusing to marry in order to decide their own futures. As there had been a furor over birth control in the afternoon session the day before with only men talking, I asked Maria how women viewed contraception. Favorably, was her reply -- but the men are the ones who make that decision, and they are against it. When I inquire if the role of women will change, Maria says yes -- but slowly. Honduran women are in for a long struggle.

Monday evening after dinner: Maria's colleagues are watching me in fascination as I fold a peace crane. I brought 500 pieces of origami paper with me, which by Saturday, turned into chains of folded birds for each delegation. The cranes are an international peace symbol, especially for youth, and I know from experience what a good ice-breaker they are. "How do you do that?" asked the boldest. She is short, round-faced with curly hair, intensely curious and prone to giggles. During the week, I learn that "How do you do that?" is her favorite question, asked about my hair, the dance step I demonstrated and a host of other New York ways. The question has served her in good stead. She asked it of a health practitioner who came to her house -- and so became one herself. She tells me tales of going house to house, dressed simply so as not to shame the village women, eating what is offered, gauging which knowledge she has will be most useful to her hostess, never knowing how she'll be received. One day, she met a woman who had 16 children and only one bed for all of them. Diana showed her how to plant hardy vegetables around her shack. In gales of laughter, she calls me "Tall Laurel." More laughter ensues as I dub her "Short Diana." I will think of her on her journeys.

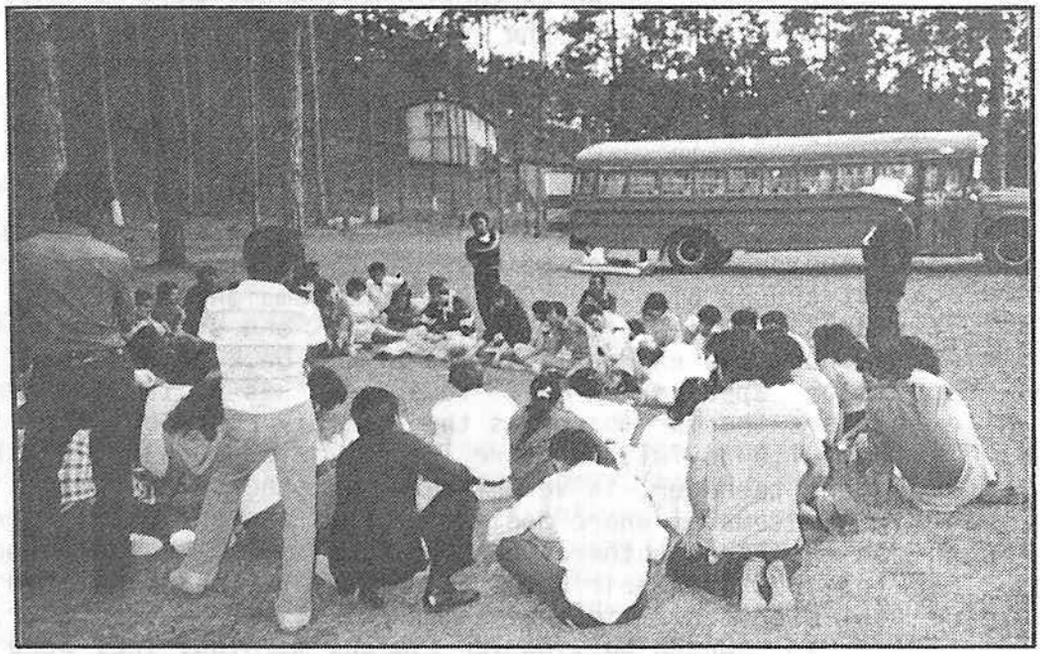
Monday, driving around Tegucigalpa: We are in a wealthier suburb, and the story I hear seems surreal as we pass white villas and magenta azaleas plastered against a deep blue sky. Carlos is Guatemalan, his wife Sonia, Mexican. They are in their forties now, she tall and slender with a wryly patient air, he short and energetic, a cap tilted back on his head. A delighted expression appears on his face as he has us try to "Name That Tune" while he plays the marimba or as the assembly roars out the Spanish version of "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee". Their daughter, a stunning, graceful, diffident teenager, is very like her mother. For many years, they lived in Guatemala, where Sonia taught at the university and where Carlos organized the first Lutheran congregation among the indigenous population. They left because their names were on death lists: she, in 1980, after being followed three times by helicopters; he, a year later, after he found men in a Volkswagen waiting for him one morning. They were lucky. His brother and sister-in-law and their three children disappeared. Carlos speaks somberly of the terror, of how after leaving the country, it takes a long time to learn to speak freely again. The Guatemala delegation had to leave on Thursday night. As they pulled out, Carlos remarked that their cautious, withdrawn manner reminded him of Sonia after she escaped. Carlos, preaching the word of joy in the face of persecution, speaks with authority. His presence permeates the gathering. I have learned much of what it means to live the Gospel by watching him.

Wednesday, discussion group: Another of Teresa's stories. In 1954, the CIA and United Fruit were responsible for the overthrow of the democratically-

Honduras report contd.

elected government of President Arbenz. Teresa lived in a part of Guatemala which resisted the coup. The area was bombed by US planes. When Teresa's father was killed by a bomb, the family decided to flee. They boarded a train which was bombarded by two planes. The passengers disembarked pell-mell. In the confusion, the family was separated. When they found each other again after several hours, Teresa's mother was covered with blood. They thought at first she had been wounded, but in fact, the blood came from the man next to her on the train, who had been killed by the bombing. Somehow, the family had been entrusted with the child of US missionaries. Knowing North Americans were responsible for the bombing, the family called the US embassy -- which sent a car bearing an American flag to escort the child and the family to safety.

Saturday evening, after dinner: I am talking with a young woman: short, sensible, spunky, with a ready smile. She tells me of her mother, who used to work as an administrator in a Guatemalan high school. In 1981, the students called a strike and the soldiers were sent in to break it up. Her mother walked out of work one day and saw a student running full tilt, falling under a rain of bullets. The soldiers were flushing out groups of students, telling them to run or they'd be killed. As the students fled, the soldiers shot them. This woman told God her life was in God's hands, and then started walking -- very slowly -- toward the soldiers. She somehow got past them. The family left Guatemala soon thereafter.

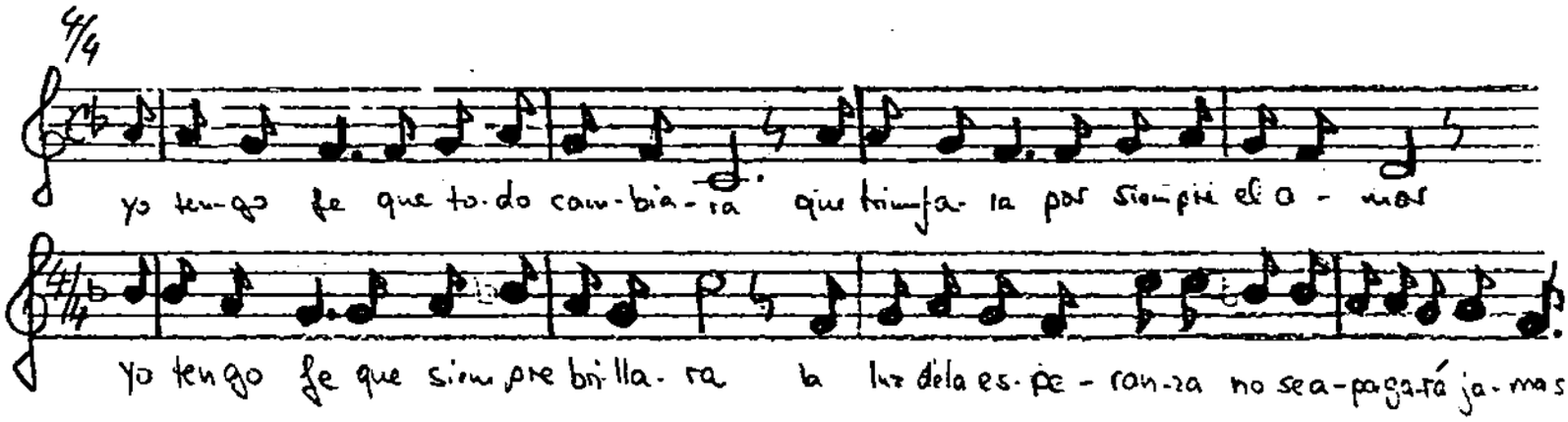


Thursday evening, 10 PM: The yellow school bus is filling with Guatemalans, who are leaving early. As good-byes are being said, a young man who had talked to me earlier came over, visibly moved. "Continue in the struggle", he said as he embraced me. The bus pulled out to shouts of "Vive Guatemala!" I wondered how many would still be alive in ten years' time.

Wednesday evening program: The Salvadoran delegation is responsible for a cultural presentation. The usual folk dance ensues, with Nelli skipping with agility around her partner. She is joined by the other women of the delegation, who then present a "socio-drama": a street scene where every

Honduras report contd.

woman speaks of a man in her life killed, disappeared, taken by the army or the guerrillas. The entire delegation then breaks into song. It is our unofficial anthem, "Yo Tengo Fe". ("I have faith that everything will change, that it will never be extinguished"...). The Salvadorans are the toughest delegation, wiry, wary, but with sudden smiles that go straight to the heart. They are perhaps living the harshest reality, but they still sing a heartfelt "Yo Tengo Fe". It hurts to watch them.



Friday night: Evening program tonight is called a Peace Vigil. It is more like the rowdiest campfire imaginable: bawdy jokes, silly songs, group charades. I am sitting in back of the Salvadorans, many of whom are howling with glee at the going-on by the fire. I could be in Vermont. After an hour and a half of frolicking, Carlos quietly reminds us that we are here to pray for peace. He tells his story, and invites others to do so. A silence falls, deep, uneasy. It is broken as, one after another, people recount the nightmares befallen them. Pablo rises to my right. He looks to be in his late twenties, short and powerfully built. He tells of being captured by the Salvadoran military and thrown into jail, wondering if he'd ever get out. He asks us somberly to remember in our prayers the children, women and men still languishing hopelessly in that dark place. A woman sobs in front of me. The Salvadorans close ranks. An older man rises, a lay leader who drones on endlessly at morning worship. His story makes us all listen in a way his homilies never seem to do. He used to live in a small Salvadoran village. Guerrillas had passed through, looking for food. Some of the women had fed them. The army learned of the incident and soon arrived, forcing the women to cook all day. They were then murdered along with other villagers -- as a lesson. This witness had been locked into a room and twice told that he would be killed. Inexplicably, he was instead released. We form a circle, praying for peace. The group disperses dispiritedly. I stand watching the flames leap, alone with Michael. In the silence, I hear my voice singing, wavering, "Where you there when they crucified my Lord...Sometimes it causes me to tremble... Where you there when they crucified my Lord?"

Thursday evening: I finally meet Gabriel, who bears an uncanny resemblance to my cousin. He is smaller and darker, but the bone structure, the tilt of the head and intent expression as he listens, the glint of laughter in his eyes and easy smile as he relaxes, all call Jon to mind. He studied at the university and now is an accountant for the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, managing much of the money for the refugee programs. He speaks in

Honduras report contd.

and anger of the search for psychiatrists and sociologists to work with the children fleeing the war, of a yellow powder being dropped which causes skin lesions. The lesions are debilitating, healing very slowly. Biologically, they do not seem to be lethal. But they serve as a mark, making it clear who has been in the affected areas. The military kills those it finds with these lesions, assuming they are guerrilla supporters. I am three years Gabriel's senior, but he is far older than I -- much too old for a 21-year-old. We become frequent companions. He will be a leader if he stays alive: quick of mind and foot, lithe, quietly self-assured, reflective, articulate, centered. The peace cranes he folds are flawless, unlike many of the bedraggled creatures looking suspiciously like pterodactyls which find their way into my bag. It tears me apart to say good-bye to him. Summer camp partings are always wrenching -- this one the more so, because his reality is so uncertain. There is nothing -- nothing at all -- I can do to keep him safe. I rage at my powerlessness. We are gathered, Salvadorans and sleepy friends, at 3:30 Sunday morning in the parking lot. Shivering, we say a prayer for safe passage. The rounds of hugs commence. I didn't think Gabriel would ever let me go. He finally looked fiercely at me and said, "I will be in the face of your cousin."

The other delegations (Panama, Costa Rica, Mexico) have as yet escaped the turmoil of their neighbors. Thus, the weight of storyteller has not been laid upon me by them. Rather, I remember faces that belong primarily to summer camp. I found a kindred spirit in Merce of Mexico, whose quick tongue and ready smile enlivened many a meal and early morning walk. Her husband would often listen rather than talk, but his observations were always apt and his sense of the ridiculous helped lighten the darker days. Mateo of Panama, arrogant as only a 17-year-old can be, a superb athlete, defiantly spouted anti-American rhetoric in small group discussions while shooting angry glances at me. I count it as no small triumph that Mateo would smile over at me by the end of the week and come sit by my side when I borrowed a guitar during breaks. I remember the Costa Ricans with affection: cool, calm Regina, who would launch herself into the fray whenever a session was too overwhelmingly male-dominated; kitten-like Ingrid, who would inquire anxiously after my state of mind when the US was described in the kinds of terms Reagan uses for the Soviet Union; gallant Arturo, with his shy smile and luxuriant moustache; hail-fellow-well-met Juan, who with his easygoing tactfulness, was a splendid small group leader.

Friday afternoon: Carlos is discussing the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. He spends the most time on "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." All week, we have been drawing parallels between the Central Americans and ancient Israel, between the US and Rome (or Babylon, depending on which Testament we're in). The Bible permeates these folks' lives in a way that has heretofore been impossible for me to understand. All the passages of a wandering, war-torn people, of Paul's promises of persecution and hardship for the Gospel's sake, are ones which have little relevance for most middle-class North American Christians. Indeed, they are the opposite of much of what has been preached to us every Sunday. At Bet-El, I see the Bible come alive and take on flesh. Faith among these people is at their core, goes all the way through them in a manner seldom seen at home. I have much to learn from these Christians. Carlos' message this afternoon shakes me deeply. He defines "poor in spirit" as those who are fearful. Now, I know fear. It is a frequent companion. Having been threatened, followed, grabbed, sexually assaulted and badly and deliber-

Honduras report contd.

ately hurt on more than one occasion, fear is never far away. What is unknown to me is the fear of these things -- and the fear of death and exile and imprisonment -- at the hands of my own government.

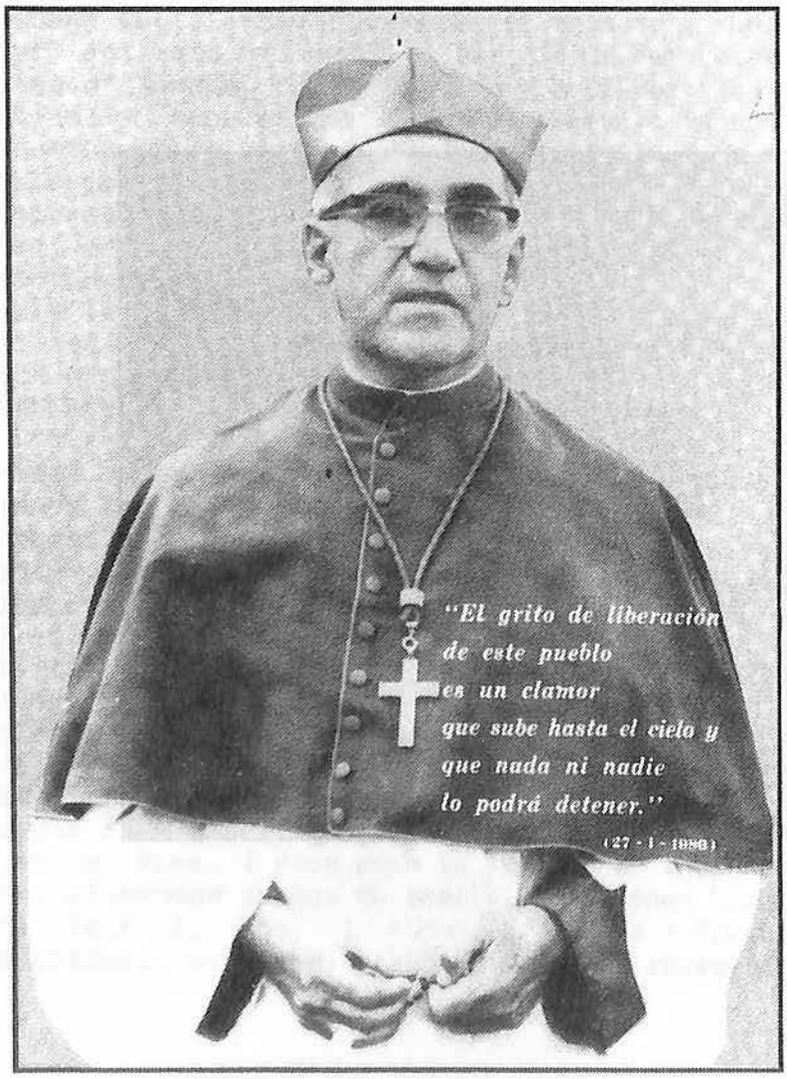
These are the stories which have been told to me this week. As Carlos tells us that we are blessed even though we are afraid, it occurs to me that, whatever causes our fears, we persevere because we don't really have a choice. Carlos tells us that to give testimony of our being blessed, we must let ourselves be used for God's purposes, that God knows our hearts and will bless us with courage. We start where we can. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." ("They said Jesus was possessed by demons", comments Carlos caustically. "They call us Communists now."). "REJOICE AND BE GLAD", thunders Carlos. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so people persecuted the prophets who were before you." Over and over again, these Biblical words we so seldom really hear in the North: You will be persecuted. Fear not. Rejoice! Persevere. My Central America-related activism in the past has grown out of an intellectual conviction that, as a US citizen, I should speak out against the US propping up regimes which murder, disappear and torture their own people. Carlos' words and this week have wrought a change. I am not sure how, but the word of God is deep in my heart in a way it never has been before.

REPORT

by Monika Drewes, youth intern, LWF youth desk

Dear Friends,

I was asked by the LWF to attend a youth congress in Central America and visit some other Latin American countries in order to build up contacts with the Spanish and Portuguese speaking Lutheran youth. You all know that the countries of the Latin American continent shake under the burden of their foreign depts and that slums surround all cities and constantly keep growing and spreading even to the inner city next to the rich areas. Foreign depts, corruption, children without a home trying to survive through children labour or robbery, young and older people without work or with a job which is underpaid living under the most miserable conditions, farmworkers without land - let this vocabulary be short reminders of the background. Politically it is not opportune neither in Venezuela, Brazil, Columbia, Honduras nor El Salvador to criticize the structures in a fundamental way or to be effectively engaged for and committed to the marginalized people who have no rights. In El Salvador and Guatemala, where under the cover of civil governments, the armies and "private" death squadrons are committing a real genocide, open critic and engagement e.g. for refugees are dangerous to life.



The scream for liberation
of this people
is a cry
that reaches up to heaven
and nothing and nobody
will be able to detain it.

Monseñor Oscar A. Romero assasinated during a worship service on the 24th of March 1980 in San Salvador

Report-Monika contd.

What does it mean in these countries to be a Christian and to belong to the church? When I met the delegations of youth groups, representatives and other young people I asked myself: how do we - which means me from Europe and these youngsters from Latin America - belong together and how are the Latin American youth tied together with each other and with their suffering oppressed peoples?

It is impossible to tell fully about my trip, but I like to give three highlights: 1) First, I want to translate for you a poem by Julia Esquivel, a Protestant theologian in exile from Guatemala, and explain to you what this has to do with my encounters; 2) then, I will report on my experiences during the First Congress of Central American Lutheran Youth in Honduras and 3) about my encounters with youth groups in Colombia and Brazil.

P A R T I

Similarity - by Julia Esquivel

If we Christians really believed
to be one body,
the one of the risen Christ,
how many situations could we change!

This little grain of mustard seed
would burst the hardest rock
and we would level the mountains of richness
in order to fill the glens of misery.

Yes, we would even live like true brothers
and sister with one another!
And the earth with all her treasures
would be "our daily bread"
and never more would we speak "our father's"
name in vain.

The possibility to make history,
the greatest of the commandments,
is sometimes very similar
to certain utopies.

Is it because of that
that those are persecuted and killed
who do really believe
and try to live their faith?

Yes, what would happen if we really believed? To know that we belong together we would actually not even need to believe. It is a fact. We are part of the one economy that makes some countries richer all the time and others more dependent. Ecologically we belong together; when the lung of world, the Amazonas area in Brazil, is destroyed we are all short of breath. But it is something very special, to recognize this community, to feel it as the body of Christ, to celebrate it as a great treasure and to love and care for it more than for anything else.

Many people ignore the "belonging-together". In Europe for example we buy Bananas and coffee from Latin America and do not know who sweats and dies for it. And those who sweat and suffer and often just struggle for surviv-

Report-Monika contd.

al have no power to unite and organize and if they think about us it is surely not in a positive way.

It is clear what this means: our belonging together is reality, and to live as if we were on our own means: to live in a lie. Try to imagine: there is a body of which nearly 80% is hurting, bleeding, suppurating and rotting and 20%, equivalent maybe to an arm and a shoulder, still live without great wounds. How would you think these 20% feel? If for example this arm would not feel very well, do you think a beauty cream or a lotion would help? What a nonsense! The arm that is not yet hurting has no chance to survive alone. It would be stupid not to assume that! The arm - on behalf of itself and not because of charity! - has to see to it that the whole body is healed!

You yourself know how much it affects your whole well-being if only a tooth hurts. And that if you still want to go on as if nothing has happened you have to swallow tablets - the result is apathy and lethargy. How much medicine to stop the pain, tranquilizers and possibilities to divert does one arm of 20% need to forget about his belonging to the hurting body? I asked myself these questions and especially also the youth groups in Brazil and Colombia.

But let us look also at this image from another angle: What happens if some parts of the suffering body of Christ start to realize and feel that they belong together? Instead of just vegetating they will probably experience two things: they will also feel the pain of the others, they will look for healing together and come to know a common energy for life - the power of Christ's resurrection.

P A R T II

This, the pain and power of the recognized unity, is exactly what I experienced during the meeting in Honduras which took place from March 24 - 29 and during my stay in El Salvador.

To the youth congress in Honduras, buses brought large delegations from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras and planes brought smaller groups of participants from Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama and in addition Laurel from the US and me from Geneva. Peace, paz, was the theme and the center of the encounter, a burning issue especially for the Guatemalans and Salvadoranians suffering from open civil wars. They came together to consider

Report-Monika contd.

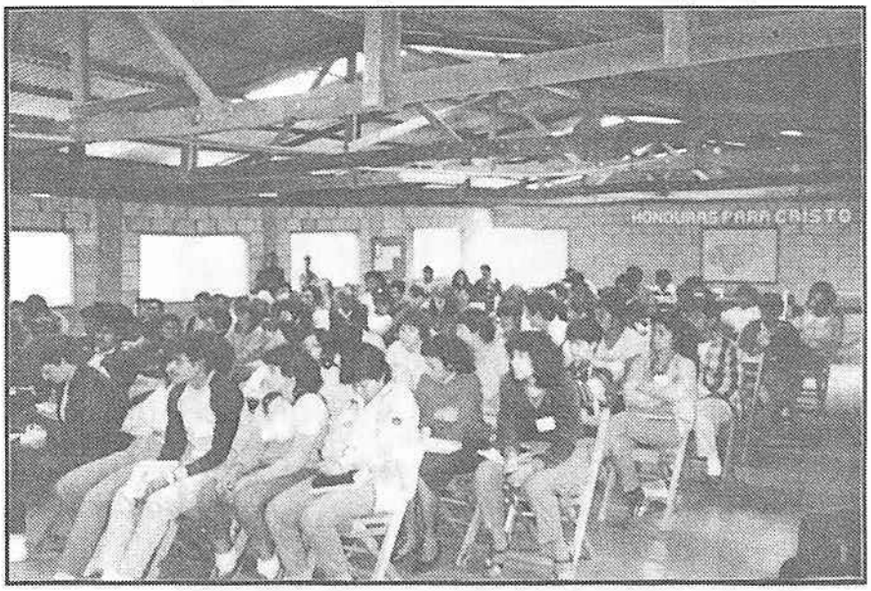
how to support each other and mobilize means of healing. From the very beginning the common base and interest was clear: we are struggling for the same goal, we belong to one body.

One of the favorite songs of the meeting expressed this very well:

> Brother/sister give me your hand and let us go together,
> to search for this little thing called freedom/liberty.
> This is the first hour, this is the right place.
> Open your door because outside your land is in need!

In the opening worship service K. Mahler said: "Don't bend your heads now, when we are praying. Open your eyes and see: brothers and sisters, creatures and images of GOD. Stand straight because GOD is near and gives us strength." As we looked at each other and felt how close we are, we understood something about GOD's miracles and what miracles she will do through us.

To start with a common way, to search for healing and peace, means to search for the source of the evil, not only to lament together. We analysed the situation by means of presentations and group discussions.



For example: the economy - how is it possible that in each Central American country only 12% of the population build the market and 88% are too poor to participate in it by buying products? Instead of caring for a just distribution of their wealth for all (farm)workers to enable them to be part of the market, the countries in Central America only united their small 12% markets to enlarge the radius of trade.

1962	76%	of the	population	earned	70$	per	person	and	year
and	3%	" "	"	"	15.000$	"	"	"	"
1983	76%	" "	"	"	80$	"	"	"	"
and	3%	" "	"	"	23.000$	"	"	"	"

this means a drastic worsening of the living conditions of the majority of the population if the decrease of buying-power is taken into considera-

Report-Monika contd.

tion. In addition the multinational cooperations (TNC's) draw out of the countries whatever they can.

This economical disaster, the **injustice**, is the fundamental violence in Central America. Out of this violence, all other forms of violence emerge, the one of the guerilla that wants to change, and the one of the armies, the death squads and - more subtle - the mass media that want to assure the well being of the rich, the TNCs and the USA which considers this area as its fore-garden.

We analysed: does the struggle between rich and poor also exist in the church, where and how? Which role can the youth play in the search for peace? To answer the last question the young people came up with the following list:

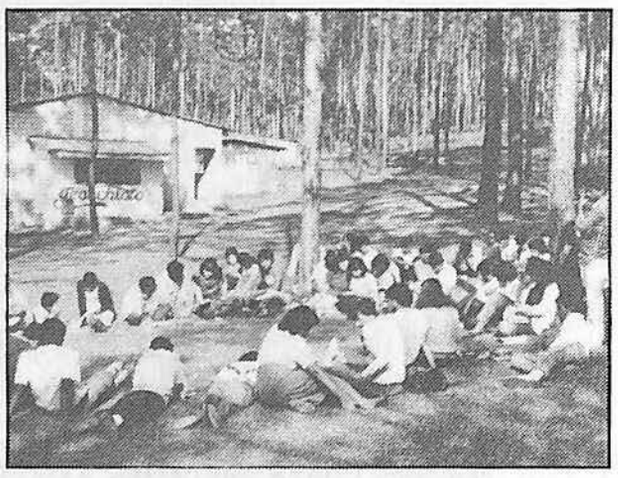
a) we have to incorporate into movements with progressive ideas;

b) we have to identify with the suffering that touches our nearest sisters and brothers in these instances;

c) we have to wake up the consciousness of all young people who are not yet conscious of the reality they live in;

d) we have to help to form education and cultural development;

e) we have to undergo a real commitment with GOD and our neighbor.



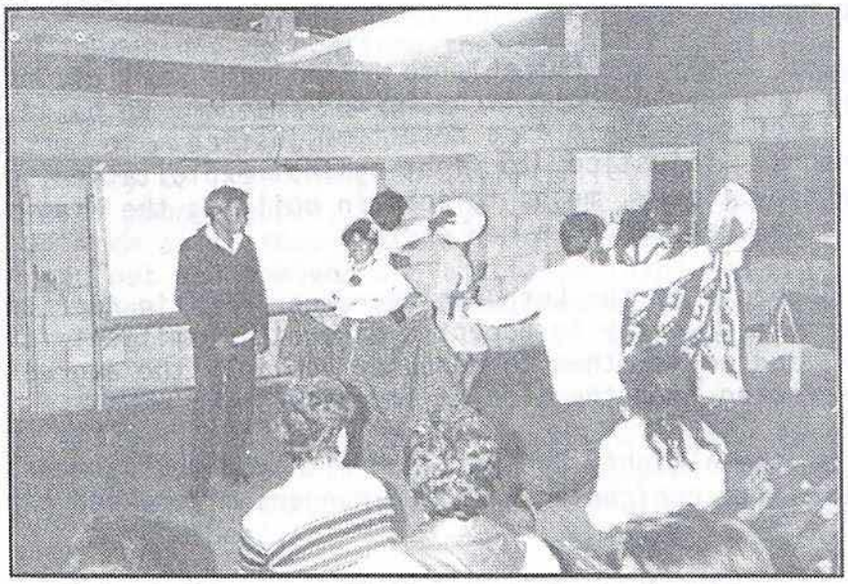
We analysed the ideology that is imposed for disorientation through TV, propaganda and advertisement so that even the poorest support their own miserable position and do not come to the idea to fight it. We asked ourselves: How are we involved and imprisoned in the dictated patterns of fashion, prejudice, man-woman-relationship etc.

Yes, everything in this meeting belonged together: The people at first, but also the discipline and patience to listen, discuss, write papers of consensus, then the fun of dancing, playing, singing, the celebration of services, prayer and silence and the thoughts about strategies to overcome the oppression and misery. Feelings of mourning and pain and pure fun, jokes and laughter had their right side by side. For me it was a miracle and an encouragement against all wishes for painlessness and comfort that

Report-Monika contd.

hope and pain belong together so closely. One friend prayed in the night of Good Friday at the campfire: "Dios mio, my Lord, do not take away from me the pain, because this would be as if you would take away from me life itself."

On the last day the final documents were compiled and a committee was elected with two representatives per country to stay constantly in contact with the Lutheran youth of the different countries and to prepare the next congress in 1987. The fact that the Nicaraguan delegation was missing, because of the tensions on the border - was deeply felt and all others wanted to include them into the process and the next meeting. Nicaragua meant a great hope for everyone and there was no doubt about the solidarity for the Nicaraguan people. Nicaragua participated - for this time - in a special way through the songs from the misa campesina, which gave the rhythm and tact of life:



You are God of the poor, the human and simple GOD
the God who sweats in the street, the God with the tanned face.
And therefore I talk to you, like my people talks.
You are the worker God, you are the laboring GOD.

Or another:

I believe in you, architect, engineer, craftsman, carpenter,
bricklayer, fitter,
I believe in you, constructor of thoughts, of music, of wind,
of peace and love.

During the final Easter night service, again two things that are normally separated were united: the celebration of the resurrection of Christ and the promise of a concrete commitment for peace. With their right fists raised first the members of the elected committee prayed and promised to engage fearlessly for their cause and their people and then all of us did the same, promising to support them in their difficult task. You all know, that where people "disappear" daily and committed people are branded as communists and guerrillas, these promises are not superficial. Therefore,

Report-Monika contd.

also your thoughts, your prayers, your letters, your support will help them. To end this second part of my report, I would like to translate for you the summarizing part of the final document:

"Facing the violence that affects us as a consequence of the misery of our peoples;
Facing the North American aggression and occupation of our peoples;
Facing the destruction under which our environment is suffering because of war and capitalistic exploitation;
Facing the cultural foreign infiltration, or even extinction, that is imposed on us by the dominating classes;
Facing the bloodshed and threat of war in which our nations have to live;
Facing the injustice and inequality that governs Central America;

we as Christians must not be silent, and what is more, we must not allow these things to happen.

We Christians of today are not able to fulfill the will of God, without accompanying our peoples in their struggle for freedom. We believe strongly, that peace is only possible as a result of justice. To proclaim the truth, to denounce injustice, to fight against exploitation, to support equality, to destroy misery, means to join in building the Kingdom of God, means to build a new heaven and a new earth.

We ask the young people of the Lutheran churches in Latin America, in the US and Europe most urgently to accept a concrete commitment for peace in Central America, and we ask them to denounce publicly the aggression that our peoples are facing from the side of imperialism.

In the name of the almighty God we plead with you to assume a Christian attitude of solidarity confronted with the hunger, misery and exploitation that we suffer.

By all that we expressed, we reject the violence against our peoples and speak out loudly and accompany our peoples in their struggle for freedom, whatever suffering might ensue; we are sure that God is with us on this way, for happy are those who suffer for the cause of justice and give their lives for their sisters and brothers."

P A R T III

As far as South America is concerned, I had the chance to be for one week in Columbia and for 10 days in Brazil. Luz-Marina, the President of the nationally organized Lutheran Missionary Youth of Columbia (J.L.M.C.) accompanied me for almost the whole time to meet youth groups in Bogota, Tunja and Sogamosa: small groups of between 10 and 20 people, who were used to meet under the supervision of a pastor once a week or every two weeks of the ages 12-29. Discussing with her, with church workers and the young people themselves about the church, listening to their problems and how they understand themselves, I got the following impression about this youth:

As part of the Spanish speaking Lutheran community, the youth I met does not belong to the marginalized majority of the Colombian population. The

Report-Monika contd.

former leadership of the church youth that got more and more involved in the problems of the poor and came up with radical ideas for change of liturgy and church commitment has not been tolerated by the congregations and their church leadership, and had to give place to a newly oriented youth, more looking for their spiritual sources, their identity as Christians and Lutherans. Prayer and religious songs are essential parts of their meetings. But they, themselves, expressed their lack of enthusiasm and growth in numbers and did not feel fully satisfied with their way of being part of the church. From time to time groups start with social activities, selling old clothes in favour of the poor people in Bogota, or singing on Christmas in an old-peoples-home. Analysis of structures that cause poverty, bleeding from the same wounds as their people and a political engagement coming out of their Christian live, if far off. We were discussing that point and one girl openly admitted: "I am scared to be involved like this: everybody who is doing so would be branded as a communist and loose his/her career." That is very honest and very clear. The young people from the ex-youth leadership do continue their kind of involvement in different and separate ways and without the label of being church youth. The present youth feels that something is missing in their groups and looks for the prophetic dimension, the dimension of denouncement of injustice which would be necessary to live their Christian life. I see hope, having talked to both wings of young people, that the things that have come between them and separated them as if they would not belong to the same body of Christ, could be worked out and removed and that also inspiration and solidarity coming from other Latin American countries would help the youth work on the whole to overcome their crisis or better: their stagnation.

In Brazil I attended one district (small) youth meeting in Sao Paulo and a regional one (bigger) near Belo Horizonte on one of the faziendas of the TNC: Mannesmann, and I had the opportunity to meet the preparatory group for the next big summer camp of the Lutheran youth in Brazil: "Repartir Juntos" - "Share together".

By knowing the slogans of the Brazilian church during the last years like: "land of God = land of all" or "Through Jesus Christ, peace with justice", I did not expect that the groups of young people I met, and who were mostly recruited from the big cities, would be as unconscious of the problems of their country and continent as they were. The young people in the two youth meetings were highly individualistic - mostly coming from (upper) middle class with German ancestors. The meeting on the private ground of a TNC - while the "movement of the people without land" is of increasing importance - was not questioned and did not bother the youth. You can imagine that we had a very hard time discussing: The "cage" of daily work and stress, the striving for work and education, the fact that the youth groups were not growing in spite of many efforts taken to make good programs, was the kind of suffering that they were thinking of. (One young man came up with this image of the "cage" and compared his life to the life of a bird in a birdcage. Even though the door is always open he has to return because of the food inside, the necessity to make his living.)

Comparing them with the youth of Central America and especially of El Salvador, it was striking that they had no aims outside their group. Not burning inside for peace, for justice, everything they did in their programs seemed to be changeable and as if you could pick it out from a big supermarket of possibilities - but not really satisfying and challenging.

Report-Monika contd.

Similarly, in Columbia I found the youth work as a branch of the church, quite apart even from the rest of congregational life without impacts and challenging involvement in congregation and liturgy life and the decision making.

A hopeful sign I found in the committee that prepares the next "Repartir Juntos". Their consciousness about the reality of the majority of Brazilian men and women, and also about the passive stand and the ignorance in that respect of the Lutheran youth is high. They want to increase awareness of youth and sensitize them on the broadness of Christian faith. The next theme will be: "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

Of course also this statement, taken from the Nicene Creed, is primarily interpreted in an individual way. But to stop fixing religious matters to the soul and spiritual themes might be a first step to also take the concrete bleeding body of Christ today seriously. And finally, I even have hope for the regular youth groups when I felt their reaction to the image of Christ's body that I brought before them. They were touched and started to think about how - for their own sake and for the sake of others - they could start feeling unity with the rest of the body, getting into contact and searching for healing.

Dear brothers and sister, that is exactly what has to go on. The search for contact, for peace through justice. During my trip we started planning to have something like the Youth Newsletter for Spanish - and Portuguese speaking youth. We were thinking about a Latin American youth meeting with a great impact of the Central Americans, so that they might find more solidarity and share with the youth and the churches of the other Latin American countries the strength and faith that grew among them while they were working as young people in their churches for the sake of all their people. If you want to get in touch with any of the youth groups I met you may ask for names and addresses.

Again:

If we Christians really believed
to be one body,
the one of the risen Christ,
how many situations could we change!

"REPARTIR JUNTOS" - Vorbereitungsrundbrief

Vorbereitungsrundbrief für das grosse brasilianische Jugendlager "Repartir Juntos" ("Gemeinsam Teilen") im Januar 1987

So wie die alte Vorbereitungskommission so sind wir auch in der neuen Überzeugt, dass das Ferienlager in Sobradinho (1986) die Mühe gelohnt hat. Wir sind sehr gewachsen. Jetzt gilt es weiterzugehen. Und wir fühlen - wie es auch einmütig von den Teilnehmern zum Ausdruck gebracht wurde - dass das Ferienlager "Repartir Juntos" nicht mehr einfach nur auf sieben Tage im Ferienmonat begrenzt sein kann. Das Vorhaben, "gemeinsam zu teilen" und im christlichen Engagement Zeichen des Reiches der Gerechtigkeit und des Friedens zu konkretisieren, muss sich in unseren Jugendgruppen, Gemeinden und schliesslich an den Orten, wo wir leben, während aller Tage dieses Jahres verwirklichen. Das Ferienlager ist eine Etappe auf dem Weg und nicht nur eine Woche zum Ausruhen. Und auch deshalb wollen wir von Anfang an mit Euch Kontakt aufnehmen. Wir möchten Euch einladen, an den in Sobradinho aufgeworfenen Fragen weiterzudiskutieren...

Bei unserem ersten Vorbereitungstreffen haben wir das Thema des nächsten Lagers (1.-7. Februar 1987) festgelegt: "Ich glaube an die Auferstehung des Leibes". Mittels unseres Körpers erfahren wir die Wirklichkeit, sei sie religiös, sozial, sexuell, wirtschaftlich, psychologisch..

Sehr oft sind wir ohne es zu merken, sehr weit von unseren eigenen Körpern entfernt. Wir denken und reden viel. Aber wir fühlen und berühren wenig. Manchmal handeln wir als wären wir Maschinen... Der Tod scheint die endgültige Wahrheit über unser Leben zu sein. Aber in Jesus Christus wurde Gott menschlicher Körper. Er will mit uns sprechen. Will uns kennenlernen in unserer Wirklichkeit. ER ist auferstanden, um uns eine Alternative zum Tod anzubieten. Und so können unsere Körper heute an der Auferstehung teilhaben, indem sie sich im Kampf um das Leben in Fülle hier und heute engagieren... Aber nun genug gesagt, der Rundbrief soll ja keine Predigt und kein theologischer Vortrag werden. Lasst uns nur noch einen kleinen Abschnitt von Rubem Alvez zitieren, der über den menschlichen Körper dichtet:

"..Mit Freude und Schönheit kämpft es sich besser. Die auferstandenen Körper sind die schönsten Gerilleros, weil sie in ihren Händen die Farben des Regenbogens tragen. Und die Körper verwandeln sich in Samen, die die Erde schwängern, auf dass eine neue Zukunft geboren werde."

Der Gott des Lebens möge euch alle segnen,

Euer Organisationsteam

ANTI APARTHEID EFFORTS

The Christian churches are finding a fresh expression in the renewed acts of worldwide Christian solidarity shown at the Harare meeting of the 100 church leaders on South Africa last December (4-6) which took place at the invitation of the Geneva based WCC, one of them being the therefrom resulting "Youth meeting on South Africa" which will take place July 1-7, 1986 also in Harare. 50 representatives of the South African young Christians and 50 young representatives of the Christian churches of the world are invited by WCC/Program to Combat Racism to Harare, Zimbabwe to explore the possibilities of international support of a just solution to the South African problem. The LWF will be represented by Sister Ellen Martha Blaasvaer from Norway, who is at the moment a youth intern at the Women's Desk of the LWF Department of Studies. In the next issue we will report on the outcome of the conference in order to make you a part of the broader action to support Christians in South Africa in their efforts.

As a contribution to the unfortunately still burning issue of South Africa, we want to share with you a so far not published interview with Allan Boesak, a South African theologian of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (the interview was done by Udo Hahn - FRG - after the Pre-Assembly youth Gathering in Budapest):

QUESTION: In your opinion, in what way can the LWF contribute to peace and justice?

ANSWER: In its attitudes the LWF should leave no doubt as to where it stands. This also means calling evil things by their name, e.g. the situation in Central America, in the Near East and in South Africa. As far as South Africa is concerned, it would be the task of the LWF to support those churches who fight against apartheid or those who are members of a peace movement. It is, however, not enough for the LWF to say that they support the churches in South Africa if they do not reconsider critically their own connections with this region. Finally, a further contribution could be to strengthen the peace movement in Europe and the United States which means more than just a confession that the peace movement is a positive thing.

QUESTION: What is your attitude towards the question of violence which at the moment is being very much discussed within the peace movement?

ANSWER: I am against violence because violence does not solve any problems. The militarism in different regions of the world make me very sad because it looks as if human life has become very cheap. But precisely where violence is concerned, there are really insane ideas prevailing within the western churches. They have accepted violence in their own struggle for freedom, they approve of wars and justify this on the basis of the Bible. Their own governments found support in their use of violence. The destructivness of structural violence which you can find in the laws of society has too often been disregarded. But, when people in the Third world struggle for things they believe in, all these churches suddenly adopt a pacifist attitude. For me this is a big problem. For example, we have called upon western churches to help us in our nonviolent struggle against apartheid by exerting economic, political and cultural

pressure, but the result has been too meager. They know that the South African government makes it difficult for us to struggle without violence. Young people who protest are exposed to hard repercussions, even threatened with prison, torture and death. I do not believe in a violent solution but my people are desperate, they no longer believe in what the church says. They no longer trust western governments and churches. If we wait for their help we can wait forever, they say, and consequently follow the path of violence. For me this is a terrible experience but I can understand this reaction. Maybe the time will come when they push people like me aside because they might believe that we are against the peace struggle instead of supporting it.

QUESTION: You said that the church is called upon to "dream God's dream". What do you mean by this?

ANSWER: God's dream is the longing for a peaceful world in which we encounter each other in love instead of war, do justice instead of exploiting people. This message appears in the whole Bible, especially in Jesaja. It is, however, not a vague dream that removes people from this world, but the true reality, God's dream in this world. What the Prophets once said and Christ died for will become reality. Today, however, we find lies, violence, oppression, sin. The sin of the world is the reality, but it is a false reality. The church has the task of serving God unrestrictedly.

QUESTION: Do you think that the troublesome "youth of the world" will be able to stop this madness on earth?

ANSWER: It is a hopeful sign that young people engage themselves in the struggle for freedom. But I do not know if the church has courage enough to include them and to trust them. However, if this does not happen we will lose them. The credibility of the church is not too strong in this world as it too often made compromises with the Gospel. If we do not engage the young people, they will turn elsewhere or become disillusioned.

QUESTION: You said that Christians should have a "holy anger". What do you mean by that?

ANSWER: We should have a "holy anger" because many things are false and we do not have to accept e.g. that children die. That is not God's will. Too often we allow the reality of our sinfulness to tell us how to act. Because the church accepts too much of the injustice done, it lacks anger on that score, an anger which is especially noticeable in the Prophets of the Old Testament.

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P R A Y E R

June 16, 1986, World Day of Prayer and Fasting for South Africa

In memory of the uprising in Soweto and the oppression which has continued in the most cruel way until today, the youth interns of the Ecumenical Center collected their thoughts in this prayer and distributed it in the whole Center and also in the town of Geneva:

In solidarity with the oppressed, suffering and struggling people of South Africa, God of life and justice, we are praying.

Before you,

we remember the children's and pupil's uprising in Soweto 10 years ago, the cruel murdering and slaughtering of thousands of children then and up to now.

We remember the leaders of the South African people as for example Nelson Mandela, imprisoned now for more than 20 years and the banned and exiled South Africans elsewhere.

We remember the Crossroads community which fought for 12 years not to be displaced and are now forced by more vicious and subtle means to move.

We remember and notice the sin of apartheid that imposes inhuman conditions on the majority of the South African people: hunger, terror, pass-laws, segregation... daily and systematically, and that turns the white minority and their collaborators into instruments of the devil, perverting also their humanity.

We remember the worldwide community and ourselves taking part in apartheid by benefiting from this exploitation through means of trade with South Africa, money in many banks and lack of denouncement.

God, mother of life, father of justice,
we lift this situation,
the victims of apartheid,
and all our praying and fasting
up to you and we cry: why?
and we ask you: how long will this last?

God of mercy; make an end to the suffering and oppression in South Africa now!

Listen to the blood crying from the earth, now!

Let people's power, the democracy, win and evade the cancer of the present system, now!

Don't let our prayer serve to give away our responsibility but empower us and change us to denounce apartheid and fight it on all levels, now!

In the name of Jesus Christ, who suffered and suffers from the sin of apartheid and died to give life in its fullness to everybody.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who is risen, so that the South African people of all colors and we with them might rise from the death of apartheid.

God, we plead with you, we urge you, we pray to you. AMEN!

"FUER MICH IST DIE KIRCHE SOWAS WIE HEIMAT"

DDR-Liedermacher Gerhard Schöne auf Tournee in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland - Bericht von Udo Hahn

Nürnberg - "Ich kann nicht daran denken, dass unsere Welt ein Riss zertrennt." Der Liedermacher, von dem diese Zeile stammt, kommt von "drüben", aus der DDR: Gerhard Schöne. Nach seinem Auftritt auf dem Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentag in Düsseldorf ist es bereits sein zweiter längerer Aufenthalt im Westen. In der Bundesrepublik nur Kennern der DDR-Liederszene bekannt, ist er im anderen Teil Deutschlands ein vielgefragter Künstler. Seine Langspielplatten zählen in der DDR zu den meistverkauften. Gerhard Schöne ist ein Kuriosum: Er tritt sowohl beim "Festival des politischen Liedes" als auch bei kirchlichen Veranstaltungen auf, so beispielsweise 1984 bei der Jugendvorkonferenz des Lutherischen Weltbundes in Budapest oder auf Kirchentagen in Dresden und anderswo. Der Liedermacher hält sich nach eigener Aussage bewusst zur Kirche, ist dort sogar gross geworden und sammelte seine ersten Erfahrungen auf seiner künstlerischen Laufbahn in einer Laienspielgruppe, nachdem er seine Arbeit als "Korpusgürtler" (kunsthandwerklicher Metallberuf) aufgegeben hatte.

Schöne, ein Beispiel für die Normalisierung des Verhältnisses Staat-Kirche in der DDR? Er selbst sagt, wer mit offenen Karten spielt, hat seine Möglichkeiten. Anders als andere hat er nie in der Kirche Zuflucht gesucht, sondern umgekehrt, ist aus ihr an eine noch grössere Oeffentlichkeit herausgetreten.

Als Pfarrersohn in Coswig bei Dresden geboren, lebt er heute mit Frau und Kind in Ost-Berlin und bekennt ganz offen: "Für mich ist die Kirche sowas wie Heimat." Und doch versteht er sich nicht als "christlicher Liedermacher", denn es gibt, so sagt er, ja auch keinen "christlichen Anstreicher." Vielmehr sieht er sich in seinem Liedermacher-Dasein als Christ. "Erwarten Sie aber keine Verkündigungslieder wie 'Du musst heute noch dein Leben Jesus übergeben', das ist nicht mein Stil."

In seinen Liedern geht es um Veränderung, von Menschen und Verhältnissen, in denen sie leben. Schönes Sprache ist präzise und klar, ohne Schnörkel und doch kunstvoll. Seine Texte sensibilisieren für das Kleine, Unscheinbare - "Weint ein Kind am Abend, ist das nicht schlimm, sagen die Grossen, Tränen gibts viele; ist zerkratzt ein Auto, dann ist das schlimm, sagen die Grossen, Autos muss man pflegen."

Sein blick für die Realität ent-täuscht, hilft klarer sehen. Und bei allem singt er seinen Zuhörern Mut zu: "Wenn der Märchenprinz erschiene, das wär' wunderbar. Doch du weisst ja selbst, der macht sich heute leider rar. Dauernd muss man ihn vertreten. Der scheint sich auszuruhn. Man muss selbst nach Wegen suchen, selber etwas tun."

Kinder spielen in seinen Texten eine grosse Rolle. Er will damit deutlich machen, dass man die guten Anlagen in Kindern nicht zudecken dürfe, die sie als Erwachsene doch unbedingt brauchen. Gerhard Schöne, ein Liedermacher von "drüben", der es verdient hätte, bei uns bekannter zu werden.

Gerhard Schöne im Gespräch
mit Sabine Rüdiger-Hahn

Pfarrer Jonggi Doloksaribu (l.) und Pfarrer Wilfried Beyhl (r.)

BESUCH VOM JUGENDPFARRER JONGGI DOLOKSARIBU AUS INDONESIEN IN DER BRD

Bilaterale Kontakte zwischen jungen Leuten aus Deutschland und Indonesien
von Udo Hahn

Nürnberg - Zufrieden mit den Gesprächen und Begegnungen während seines sechswöchigen Aufenthalts in der Bundesrepublik zeigte sich Pfr. Jonggi Doloksaribu, Leiter der Abteilung Jugendarbeit in der Evang.-luth. Batak-Kirche (HKBP) in Indonesien kurz vor seinem Rückflug. Zweck der Reise war es, den Dienst der Kirche an jungen Menschen in der Bundesrepublik kennenzulernen und für die eigene Arbeit Anregungen mitzunehmen. "Dies ist besonders wichtig", meinte Doloksaribu, "da Indonesien ein Umbruch von einem landwirtschaftlichen Entwicklungsland zu einer Industrienation bevorsteht und meine Kirche, die in diesem Jahr ihr 125jähriges Bestehen feiert, auf diese Herausforderung reagieren muss".

Auf den 12.000 Inseln, aus denen Indonesien besteht, leben unter den 160 Millionen Menschen 15 Prozent Christen, 5 Prozent Hinduisten und Buddhisten, sowie 80 Prozent Moslems. Durch die Jugendarbeit der Evang.-luth. Batak-Kirche (1,9 Millionen Mitglieder) sollen rund 400.000 junge Menschen begleitet werden, unter denen jedoch nur rund 20 Prozent überhaupt einen Arbeitsplatz haben. Kommunikationsprobleme, schon der Entfernungen wegen, lassen sich nicht ausschliessen und auch bei evangelistischen Grossveranstaltungen fehlt es meist an entsprechendem technischen Gerät. Um an dieser Stelle Abhilfe zu schaffen, führte Jonggi Doloksaribu mit verschiedenen kirchlichen Stellen Gespräche, da in Indonesien die Kirche ansonsten in aller Freiheit arbeiten kann.

Bei seinem Besuch in der Bundesrepublik hat Doloksaribu immer wieder auch die Frage nach Möglichkeiten eines Austauschprogramms für Jugendliche in seiner Kirche gestellt, um sich gegenseitig besser kennenlernen zu können, zuletzt in einem Gespräch mit dem bayerischen Landesjugendpfarrer Wilfried Beyhl (Nürnberg). Beyhl versprach, seinem Amtskollegen zu helfen, gab jedoch im Blick auf mögliche Besuchsreisen in die Bundesrepublik oder nach Indonesien zu bedenken, ob nicht durch eine direkte finanzielle Hilfe mehr erreicht werden könnte als durch gegenseitige Besuche, die ja ebenso Geld kosten. Bei einer finanziellen Unterstützung, etwa von Massnahmen in der Jugendarbeit der Kirche Doloksaribus, könne es aber auch nicht das Ziel sein, Abhängigkeiten vom Geld des Partners herzustellen.

Beeindruckt zeigte sich Landesjugendpfarrer Wilfried Beyhl von der Verbindung evangelistischer Aktivitäten mit sozialem Engagement, das Pfr. Jonggi Doloksaribu schilderte. In der bayerischen evangelischen Jugendarbeit, so Beyhl "besteht immer die Gefahr, dass daraus zwei voneinander getrennte Bereiche werden".

REPORT

on the International LWF Youth Team visit to Asia

A few notes on the objectives, composition of the group, churches visited and program of the visit:

1. Reasons and objectives of the activity

After very positive experiences with the outcome of a visitation program organized by the Youth Desk of the LWF prior to the Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering to several churches in Eastern Europe (1984), it was recommended by the Assembly in Budapest (resolution nr. 7.6) ..."that the visitation program be continued and strengthened; that wide publicity be given to it; and that youth leaders from member churches be encouraged to participate in it."

The main objectives in our concrete case were:

a) To provide an opportunity for representatives of Lutheran churches in seven different countries to be exposed to the situation of our young brothers and sisters in Christ in their growing, missionary minority churches in India, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Japan in order for them to become acquainted with the concerns of Asian youth and be able to witness about them in the home churches and for the wider public of Lutheran churches.

b) On this occasion the possibility was given to the churches in the countries visited to gather together their youth and by taking part in meetings and by contacts on a personal level the youth work of the churches could be encouraged and new links with other churches of the Federation be established.

Issues followed during the visits by the team:

1) How can young members of the Lutheran churches participate in the mission outreach of the church?

2) How are churches responding to the social needs of the environment?

3) What does LWF involvement look like and what effects does it create?

4) Ecumenical cooperation of the churches visited;

5) What are our recommendations concerning the program of the Youth Desk?

The most frequent question from our hosts was: What does it mean for us to be Christians in our different countries and churches?

Asia Report contd.

2. Composition of the team

Gudrun Döring,	youth worker of the Lutheran Church in Saxonia, GDR
Ingeborg Midttömme,	student of theology from Norway
Reinhard Braun,	grad. student of architecture and youth worker of the Lutheran Church in Brazil
Emmanuel Mtigile,	student of theology from Tanzania
Piotr Szarek,	student of theology from Poland
Peter Szentpetery,	Pastor from Hungary
Julius Filo,	youth coordinator, LWF

The group, by its composition, offered a mosaic of backgrounds:

Three members were selected from churches in socialist countries (it was decided in Budapest that youth from Eastern Europe should become more involved and after the 1984 visitation program of the LWF it was suggested that the main part of the participants in future visitation teams should come from the region visited before). The situations of the Lutheran churches in the three socialist countries present slightly different church-state relations, and advantages on the social level: guaranteed possibility to find a job, free medical care and schools... and challenges which arise from the fact that the state is trying to promote atheistic education, while churches try to keep old members and also to get new ones.

Asia Report contd.

Emmanuel from Tanzania brought a fresh witness of youth work in a growing church, with an enthusiasm that is particular to persons who have only recently discovered the great advantages of a life with Christ. Emmanuel was born into a Moslem family and the majority of his family are still Moslems, slowly recognizing the changes in his life brought about by his faith in Jesus Christ. Emmanuel often expressed his hope that they would soon be baptized.

Ingeborg often confessed that the church is so much a part of society in her country that it becomes uninteresting for many of the members and many of them only go to church a few times in their lives in spite of the fact that it offers a large variety of programs.

Reinhard spoke of the large Lutheran church which is still a small minority in Brazil, a country with many social tensions and much poverty.

The youth coordinator completed the picture by speaking about the LWF perspective of the youth work as pursued by the youth desk.

Because of the variety of experiences represented in the group, it was interesting to learn about and share the experiences of the life of young Christians and it was always a new adventure for all the participants of the meetings in the different churches.

3. Which churches were visited?

United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India - from its nine member churches, we met with representatives and groups from the following three churches:

Andhra Ev. Luth. Church (AELC)
Jeypore Ev. Luth. Church (JELC)
Tamil Ev. Luth. Church (TELC)

Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore

Lutheran Church in the Philippines

Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church

Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (also in Japan)

On the last day of the visitation, the team had and evaluation meeting and the results of this meeting were summarized by the team members as follows:

Asia Report contd.

1. **YOUTH AND MISSION - a short summary:**

- we saw that a great part of the members of the churches visited are young people;

- We met many young Christians who became Christians only recently and it was inspiring to listen to their witness; which were the factors that played a role on their way to the Lutheran Church? Several factors served as indirect promoters/channels of the Christian witness for them:

  a) they attended a Christian school, received a profiled explanation and met friends who were Christians (very often in Japan) or were staying in a Lutheran hostel with other Lutheran students who invited them to take part in the religious program (e.g. in the Philippines);

  b) radio broadcasting in several countries (e.g. in the Philippines);

  c) English lessons given by believer teachers who also used the Bible for teaching purposes (e.g. in Japan);

  d) social work of the church.

  Finally, very often a friendly, loving contact with a witnessing believer played a decisive role. Therefore, the role of young people in the mission outreach in their own generation is very important;

- a new situation, when somebody becomes a Christian, it creates different reactions. A neutral attitude on the part of the family, environment, friends is more of an exception and could be seen in such cases where the family ties are not so strong or when the religious situation seems to be open. The opposite case was stated in many instances: friends feel strange about the Christianity of their team member, families try to stop their son or daughter.

Recommendation of the group was: to study this important issue and find a way in the LWF how to encourage the missionary attitude of the youth (as e.g. suggested under 3.6 of this report).

2. **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES in overcoming different forms of social injustice (written by Reinhard Braun, Brazil)**

"Glory be to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased" - Luke 2:14

In Odorevu, India, somebody asked me: "What is peace?" Hesitatingly I answered: "Justice". Although the answer sometimes seems easy, to do something is not always so easy.

Unfortunately we must confess that in all the Asian countries we visited, we did not find one ideal church project, no proposals as to how one can change unjust situations. Two examples:

Asia Report contd.

In India we saw a lot of poor people, social tensions and injustice. We also saw a social development, education and health project. But it was only a socio-political project, not missionary, and between both we have big differences. We are sure that we cannot offer education and health conditions with one hand and come with the Bible in the other and say: "Now I will give you this and that, but you must believe in Jesus Christ." What we should know is that through all social projects coming from the church we must give a witness to the Gospel and show what is in our minds and why we do this kind of work."

"In the Philippines we had a full meeting in a church, almost in a slum. After our meeting we crossed the slum and could see a lot of necessities. We went downtown and there children came to us, asking for money. We took some pictures but we were advised not to give them money. Then we went shopping, asked for the cheapest prices, like all tourists do, and after that we went to a rather expensive restaurant for dinner. When we asked the pastor what kind of work they are doing among these people, the answer was: "It is almost impossible to bring them to our congregations." I would even say that it is impossible. As a church we must go a step further. We should not only want to bring these people to our church but go to them. This means, not only to come with money of which we have too much and give it to them, nor imagine that we are superiors and only want to teach them. We should become like them, come to their level. We heard of some Roman Catholic missionaries living in the slums. Only by living among them can we understand their problems and their anxiety. Only then can they accept the Gospel and understand what we have to do as Christians. This would be our mission."

Meeting with youth in

in Metro Manila (Philippines)

Asia Report contd.

But, actually, what do we really want?

During our trip to five different Asian countries our minds were opened to an endless number of necessities. What we are trying to do is to share our anxiety and what we understand as our mission, as youth and as Christians, in our world.

The traditional youth group-work and the traditional work of the church is very important, but we should do something else as well. On different levels we can find needs: poverty, sickness, handicapped, abandoned children, etc. We should try to come to each one of these levels and show our faith, teach the Gospel and help these people with all that they need.

It is not enough to become poor to help poor people or sick to help sick people. Also, it is probably not in our hands to make all poor people rich or all sick people healthy.

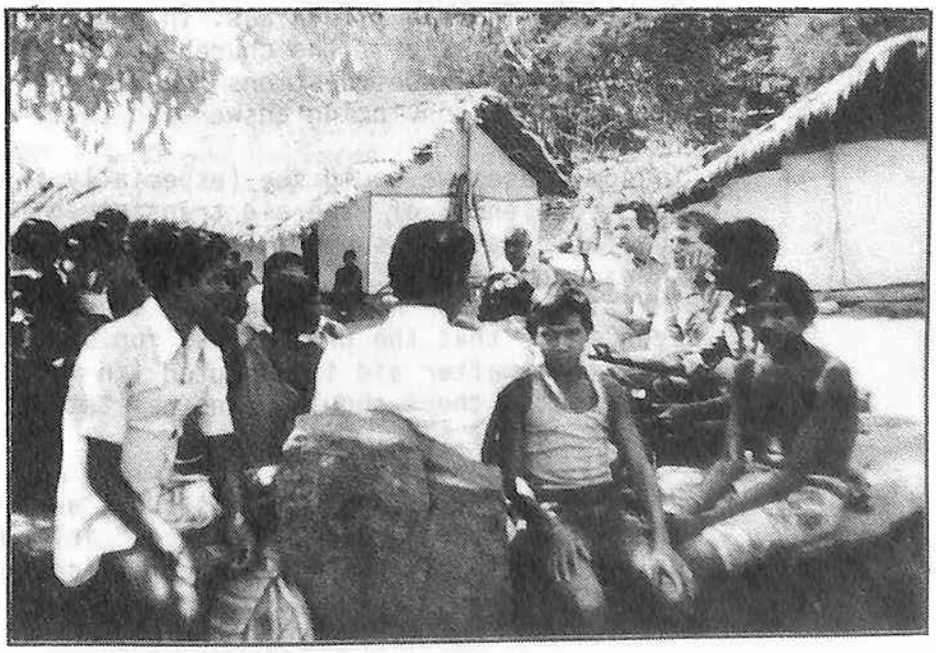
Even if we are too few and do not have the necessary power to change the whole world, we should try to do something. We should follow the mission started by Jesus Christ, change hearts and minds and show through concrete projects that our world can be different.

The church does not need to be a political power similar to the others in the world. God is love. Love is the biggest gift and power and we must share it!

"We love because God first loved us". - I John 4:19

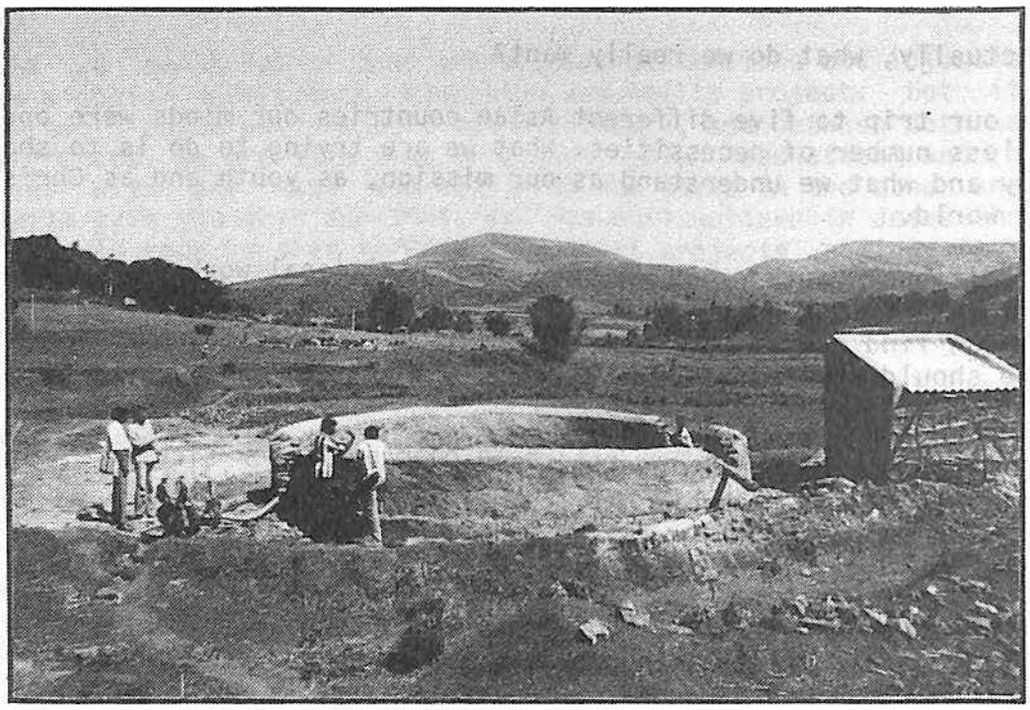
3. WHAT DOES LWF INVOLVEMENT in the churches visited look like and what kind of effects does it create?

3.1. In almost all the churches visited we could see projects sponsored by LWF. These projects could be classified as: **development projects** (serving the needy people around the church, especially in India), **church construction projects** (providing new or better facilities for educational purposes and spiritual growth of the churches).



Discussion with the inhabitants of Champakanda (India, Orissa region, assisted by a LWF community development project)

Asia Report contd.



An irrigation project under construction

3.2 We have also seen "self-supportive projects" of the churches (e.g. three Lutheran churches visited have built shopping centers) from resources of the churches. Their purpose is to be a source of income for the churches. (Our question was: are the churches, who are owners of the buildings, creating possibilities for a more Christian way of influencing the prices?). We were not sure whether this is the best way to secure financial resources, necessary for the work of the church. We were thinking of a general principle: finances necessary for the spiritual work of a church should in general be provided by voluntary contributions of the members, otherwise it cannot be said that the church is really living from God's grace and the Holy Spirit, and not from investments where the relative injustice/justice is doubtful. The other idea was: In order to spread the Gospel it is always an obstacle if the church rises above the social context of the environment. These questions occupied our thoughts and we did not really get any convincing answers to them.

3.3 In some cases we could see (especially in development projects) that the recipients of the aid transferred through LWF were not aware of the fact that the support for them is a sign of love coming from brothers and sisters in Christ, and that it is actually the love of Christ that is now coming to them. In some cases, people were not even aware that the project was run by a church and Christians. We felt that after aid is accepted (in this case by non-Christians) and appreciated there should be no hesitation in conveying the motivation of the relief.

3.4 We have seen the danger of mistrust and misunderstanding in cases where LWF financial assistance, information and invitations to delegate members of the churches are channeled through one institu-

Asia Report contd.

tion only and it is distributed in a hierarchical way to the recipients in the projects and churches/ congregations. This could be avoided if all information, about transfer of money, etc. were always sent from LWF also directly to the people responsible for the project, on the level where it is carried out and as a principle all information on important matters (personnel and finance) should be sent from LWF to more than one person in the same church, operating on different levels of responsibility.

3.5 In general we could see that the LWF is known, especially in places where member churches receive financial support from LWF. In these cases the LWF involvement was clearly appreciated.

3.6 At the same time we often heard words of appreciation of this team visit and of this kind of contribution. In many places, especially in the case of young members of the Lutheran church, it was the first instance of an international sharing from which they could benefit. In some places (e.g. the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore) the wish was expressed to have the opportunity to receive a young person from another continent for a longer time (half a year) who would be part of missionary work, carried out by the church. The sharing of experiences and spiritual resources which is so important for the growth of the church (and cannot be directly supported by any convertible values) should be an important contribution of the LWF and benefit the churches at the congregational level through such an activity as in the case of this visitation program.

Therefore, we would like to recommend to the CCC to continue with this particular program of the youth desk as an essential part of the task of the LWF and look for other possibilities for sharing non-convertible values, e.g. short-term missionary programs or youth internship programs in the youth work of the churches.

4. ECUMENICAL COOPERATION of the churches visited - impressions as summarized by Ingeborg Midttömme.

Singapore:

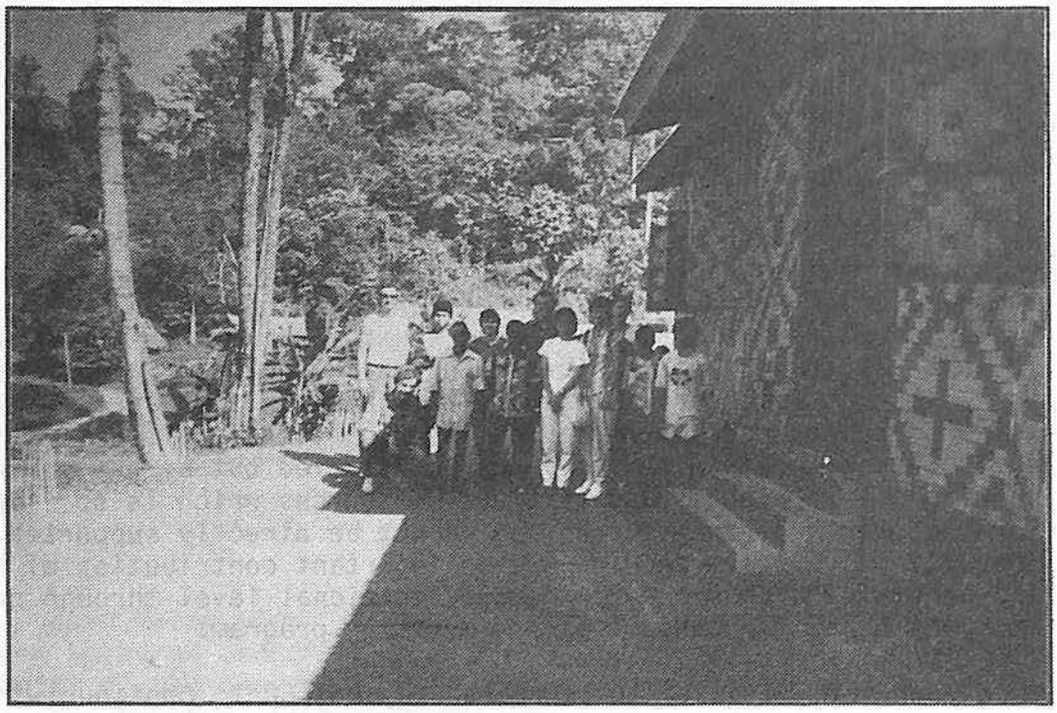
The "Trinity" College and the "Singapore Bible College" are both good examples of cooperation in Singapore. In a country with so few Christians, the main question was not if you belonged to the Presbyterian Church of to a Lutheran Church, but if you believed in Christ. The Lutheran Church in Singapore is connected with a Lutheran Church in Malaysia. But the situation for the church in Singapore is much easier because of the political system in Malaysia.

Malaysia:

The Christian Federation of Malaysia is founded by Roman Catholics, Protestants and Evangelicals. They want to take the word "ecumenic" out off the conferences and down on the grassroot level. The churches have so far responded very well. They have started to consider whether it is possible to do missionary and ecumenical work together. What is important and different in their ways of teaching about: baptism, the Lord's

Asia Report contd.

supper and the function of the pastor? Is it possible to cooperate in the training of pastors and all kinds of parish-workers? Another problem is how to bring LCMS and ELCMS closer together. They are similar except language and culture/traditions.



A new church in a tribal village (in the Highlands of Malaysia) built by LCMS

Philippines:

Most of the people belonged to the national Catholic Church. It was not that popular to be a Lutheran. One Lutheran pastor told me about problems with Catholics throwing stones into the church during services. On top of that the Lutherans are not the most active in NCCP.

Japan:

The situation in Japan seems to be very problematic. In a country with less than 1% Christians the churches should cooperate, but they do not do it. The main problems here I think is all the missionaries from all over the world - they do not cooperate either. Even from Norway there are different missionary societies working, but not cooperating.

Asia Report contd.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS for the next activity of this kind submitted by Piotr Szarek**

a) It is necessary to continue with the visitation program, it involves the wider youth constituency of the LWF and brings about a sharing of spiritual resources;

b) Pre-, inter-, and post-evaluations are necessary to build up a stronger relationship among the team members;

c) Part of the preparation should be done together before a study trip starts. More time should be dedicated to this (we had a half day briefing with some representatives of LWF in Geneva);

d) A full program should be available in advance to help the members of the group with expectations and the preparation process (the program for Malaysia was missing);

e) There were enough meetings with young people. Apart from these meetings, the free time available in a future program should leave more time for personal activities; and less for sight- seeing.

f) Two-day seminaries should be planned in the program with a specific theme;

g) Worships conducted by the team members in the congregations visited should be planned (we only gave greetings at the services attended);

h) An experienced leader from the LWF youth desk as a member of the group was appreciated;

i) Proposals for the next visitation:

- Asian group to East Africa or
- Asian group to Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO USE OUR EXPERIENCES?

At the evaluation meeting we agreed that we will try to use our experiences in the most effective way. In order to accomplish this we resolved:

- To prepare a comprehensive report, explaining the program and personal as well as shared experiences in the group. This report will be submitted to the representatives of the LWF and also be distributed to a wider public through the Youth Newsletter. A feature report on the visitation program was already published in the English LWI and a shorter one in the German LWI. The whole report, including the personal experiences of the members of the group and the youth coordinator can be requested from the Youth Desk.

- Every member of the group agreed to use his/her experiences for their own church:

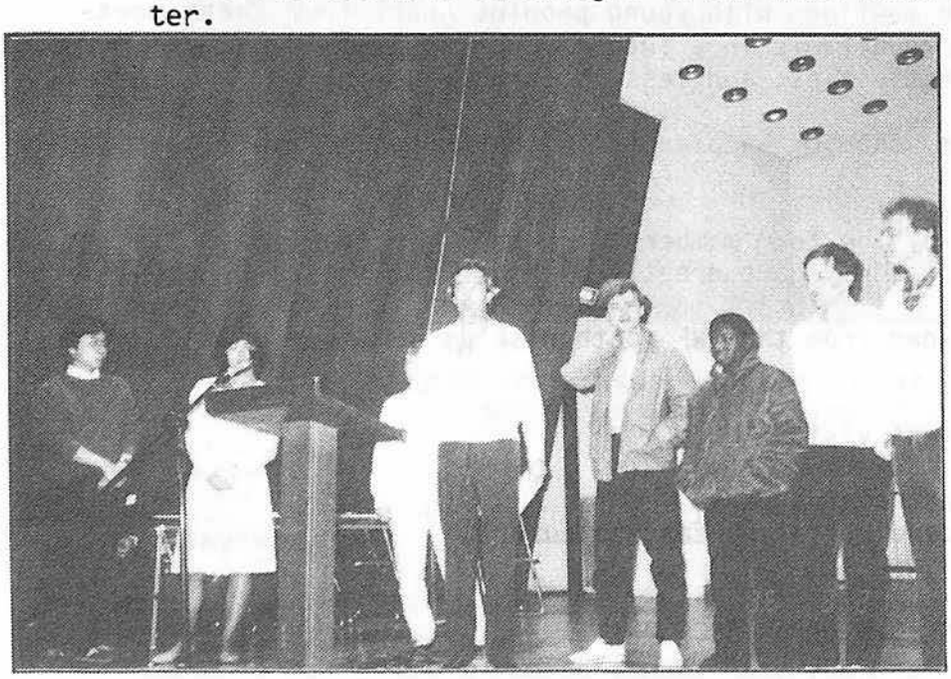
Asia Report contd.

1. by writing an article or series of articles in the church periodicals;

2. through personal reporting in the congregations, church youth meetings and other occasions, using also visual materials (slides) taken at the time of the visitation. The youth coordinator has written a letter to the leaders of the respective home churches of the group members in order to open up as many possibilities as possible for them to use the experiences gained during the visitation;

3. every member of the group agreed to follow up the personal contacts established with the young members of the churches visited and look for new friends in their own church;

4. members of the group agreed to submit to the LWF youth desk a report on the possibilities of using the experiences of the visitation for their own church. Selected parts of the recollections of the countries visited will be brought in the next issue of our Youth Newsletter.



Presentation of the District Convention of JELC in Tokyo

With sister and brothers of JELC, looking forward to visiting the big city of Tokyo

LETTER FROM A READER

The town of Detroit Lakes, Minnesota (population 7,000) lies in the northern part of the USA. It is over 300 km from the closest large city, Minneapolis. In the summertime, many people come to enjoy the lakes and fresh air. Tourism and poultry production are the two largest industries.

Yet my town is not isolated from the problems of modern living. Many people are unemployed. Prices for farm products are quite low right now. These economic worries put stress on families. Some farmers can not pay their debts, and are losing their farms. Some people turn to drink. There is violence in some homes. Recently the federal government announced that Minnesota could become the site for a permanent depository for nuclear waste products from nuclear power plants. One proposed site is just north of Detroit Lakes. There is concern about such a depository causing harm to the environment and the quality of life for people in this area.

This is part of what it is like to struggle to be a Christian in my world. There are people who need to be loved with the love to which the Gospel calls us.

At the same time, many people lead a very comfortable life in my town. Because of the beauty of the lakes, many retired people buy homes here. Others live in cottages during the pleasant summer months. It is easy for these people to enjoy themselves and ignore the problems of the community. Many of these people do not participate in the worship and service life of any Christian congregation.

I am a pastor serving two congregations along with a senior colleague. The challenge of being a Christian in my world is to attempt to keep from becoming entirely absorbed in the day to day task of parish ministry. The church council wants Sunday church school and confirmation instruction to go smoothly. The church building must be maintained properly. These are legitimate concerns. But the Gospel calls us to do more than keep the machinery of our local churches running. We are called to an expanded vision of ministry. Scripture reveals that God is concerned for the wholeness of all creation. Concern for the land is a duty for Christians because God has given the human family dominion over the earth. Scripture reveals that the reign of God is to extend over all of life, not simply the parts of life that we associate with our churches and their programs, as important as these are for the spiritual nurture of believers. Raising money to feed the hungry and participating in the rights and duties of citizenship are also important in God's sight.

To be a Christian in my world is not easy, and I am painfully aware of my failures. But along with the challenge we have the promise of the Risen Lord: "Lo, I am with you always." It is that promise that supports me as I suggest new ways that my parish can live the Gospel. That promise encourages me as an individual believer to care about the world with the same seriousness that God cares for it.

Timothy Lincoln

JUGEND UND RELIGION IN EUROPA

Wir haben den folgenden Bericht gelesen und möchten gerne wissen wie Du über ihn denkst und wie es in Deiner Gemeinde damit steht:

"Europas Jugend rückt von der Kirche ab" - Internationales Symposium über "Jugend und Religion in Europa"

Göttingen, 9, Mai 86 (epd) - Die Jugend Europas geht fortschreitend auf Distanz zur Kirche ihrer Väter, fehlt zunehmend bei den Gottesdiensten und weiss immer weniger von überlieferten Glaubensinhalten. Ihr Verhältnis zur Kirche schwankt zwischen misstraurischer Ablehnung der Institution Kirche einerseits und einem gesteigerten Interesse an den traditionellen kirchlichen Amtshandlungen andererseits. Dennoch hat Religion Bedeutung für die europäische Jugend. Nur die Formen haben sich gewandelt. So etwa lässt sich grob die derzeitige Situation von "Jugend und Religion in Europa" umschreiben, wie sie sich aus den zahlreichen Forschungsberichten führender europäischer Wissenschaftler herauskristallisiert, die zur Zeit ihre Untersuchungsergebnisse im Rahmen eines internationalen Symposiums in Göttingen diskutieren.

Unter der Leitung von Professor Ulrich Nembach vom Seminar für Praktische Theologie der Universität Göttingen diskutieren Wissenschaftler aus Oesterreich, Frankreich, Italien, der DDR, Jugoslawien, Grossbritannien, der Schweiz, den Niederlanden, der CSSR, Finnland, Ungarn und der Bundesrepublik. Ein grosser Teil der vorliegenden Forschungsberichte weist brandneue Ergebnisse auf und ermöglicht einen flächendeckenden Ueberblick über das Verhältnis zwischen Jugend und Religion in Europa.

Uebereinstimmend ist der Trend zur Säkularisierung unter der europäischen Jugend, die sich nach den Worten des Pastoralsoziologen Professor Karl-Fritz Daiber (Göttingen) im Konflikt mit der institutionellen Religion vollzieht. Doch trotz wachsender Kirchenferne, darauf verweisen Untersuchungen der Pastoralsoziologen Ingrid und Wolfgang Lukatis (Hannover) und Professor Nembach, wünscht auch die Jugend von heute kirchliche Begleitung an den Schaltstellen ihres Lebens, wie Heirat, Geburt und Tod. Das Interesse an Glaubensfragen, so belegt eine repräsentative Befragung in Oesterreich, ist milieuabhängig und hat im Leben der Arbeiter einen besonders geringen Stellenwert. Unterschiede von Religiosität und Kirchlichkeit zwischen Gymnasiasten und Jugendlichen aus dem Arbeitermilieu wies auch Professor Kalevi Tamminen (Finnland) nach.

Von Finnland im Norden bis Italien im Süden, von Frankreich im Westen bis Moskau im Osten, einigt sich die europäische Jugend in der Ablehnung von Institutionen. Dies gilt nicht nur für die Kirche, sondern zumindest in Italien und in der CSSR, auch für die politischen Parteien, In der CSSR ist das Christentum unter Jugendlichen inzwischen zu einer Form des Protests geworden. In Ungarn schreitet der Trend zur Kleingruppenbildung unter der christlichen Jugend fort, die damit, so Professor Miklos Tomka, ihr "Unbehagen am sterilen Sakramentalformalismus der Amtskirche" ausdrückt.

In der Bundesrepublik, darauf verwies Professor Nembach, vollzieht sich ein lautloser Abschied der Jugend aus der Kirche.

In Wolfsburg beispielsweise treten jährlich 1,5 Prozent Mitglieder aus, davon die Hälfte unter 25 Jahren. Es sind Jugendliche, so belegt eine Erhebung von Heinrich Buss, die nichts gegen die Kirche haben und die oft sogar ein gutes Verhältnis zu ihrem Gemeindepastor verbindet.

Was treibt die Jugend aus der Kirche und lässt sie den Glauben ihrer Kindheit verlieren?

Dieser Frage ging Professor Karl-Ernst Nipkow (Tübingen) in seinem Vortrag über die Gotteserfahrungen im Jugendalter nach. Nipkows Fazit: Die Jugend ist enttäuscht von einem Gott, der in ihren Augen als Helfer in der Not und als Schlüssel zur Welterklärung versagt hat und der für sie oft nur in fiktiven Vorstellungen, selten aber in lebendiger Erfahrung greifbar ist. Enttäuscht, so Nipkow, ist die Jugend auch vom unglaubwürdigen Verhalten von Christen und Kirche in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Und so gehört es inzwischen für Jugendliche zum Erwachsenwerden, Gott abzuschaffen.

NEWS IN BRIEF - from the life of the youth in the world

BELGIUM (Pro Mundi Vita)

To mark the UN International Youth Year (1985) PRO MUNDI VITA (Rue de la Limite 6, B-1030 Brussels, Belgium) published a study "Young People and Values in Western Europe" on young adults (the 18-24 age group) and their social, ethical and religious values. This study demonstrates that besides a remarkable stability among the generations many changes have also occured. These changes are particularly apparent in the understanding of sexuality and in religious feelings or, let us say, the relationship to the churches. Generally speaking young adults show signs of increasing individualism. The following is an interesting example of the study, answering the question: "In your opinion which, in the following list, are the major issues which in our days are worth taking risks for or for which it is worth making sacrifices?"

	young people 15-24 years	adults 25 years and over	total Europeans
Equality of the sexes	22%	15%	16%
The protection of nature	37%	35%	35%
Peace	65%	67%	67%
The struggle against poverty	37%	41%	40%
The defence of one's country	18%	24%	23%
Religious faith	10%	18%	16%
The unification of Europe	8%	12%	11%
Individual liberty	44%	39%	40%
Human rights	51%	44%	45%
Revolution	5%	2%	3%
None of the above	16%	---	3%
No answer	3%	4%	4%

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BRASILIEN - Gemeindeblatt der Lutherischen Gemeinde in Belo Horizonte

Lutherische Jugend will Ende des obligatorischen Militärdienstes

Die Jugendlichen des Lutherischen Bekenntnisses, die vom 12.-19. Januar in Sobradinho, RS, zum Jugendlager "Repartir Juntos" ("Gemeinsam Teilen") versammelt waren, machten eine Unterschriftensammlung, um den Vorschlag der Gruppe "Gerechtigkeit und Gewaltlosigkeit", einen patriotischen Zivildienst im Land einzurichten, zu unterstützen. Indem sie erklärten, dass "der obligatorische Militärdienst eine Form der Gewalt sei, die christlichen Prinzipien widerspricht" und dass durch den neuen Dienst Männer und Frauen der Nation dienen könnten "mit gemeinsamer humanitärer Arbeit für die Gemeinschaften, die sie am meissten benötigen", forderte die lutherische Jugend ihre Kirche auf, in den Gemeinden die Möglichkeit der Verweigerung aus Gewissensgründen zu fördern und darauf hinzuwirken, dass dieser Punkt in die neue Konstitution eingeschlossen wird.

News in Brief contd.

BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND - (epd)

Etwa 36.000 evangelische Mädchen und Jungen im Alter von 13 bis 14 Jahren werden heuer in Bayern konfirmiert. Hauptsonntage der Konfirmation sind traditionell der Palmsonntag (23. März) und der erste sonntag nach Ostern (Weisser Sonntag, 6. April). Der Konfirmation ist der Konfirmandenunterricht und - mit steigender Tendenz - der Präparandenunterricht vorausgegangen. Sie dauern zusammengenommen - je nach Gemeinde - zwischen sechs Monate und zwei Jahre. Untersuchungen zeigen, dass sich der Kirchen-Unterricht einer erstaunlichen Beliebtheit erfreut: 50 Prozent der Konfirmanden geben an, sie seien gerne bei der Kirche in die Schule gegangen. Soziologen bezeichnen dieses Umfrageergebnis - gerade bei Jugendlichen im kritischen Alter - als "traumhaft". Pfarrer Hans-Gerhard Maser, Referent für Konfirmandenunterricht im Katechetischen Amt der bayrischen Landeskirche (Heilsbronn), nennt die Konfirmation "die stabilste Kasualie, die wir haben". Nahezu 100 Prozent der getauften Kinder gingen auch zur Konfirmation. Im Volksbewusstsein rangiere die Konfirmation damit sogar vor der Taufe, die wiederum für die Kirche "das eigentlich Entscheidende" sei.

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BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND - (epd)

Erstaunlicher Trend bei christlicher Jugend: Kaum Nullbock und viel Interesse an der Bibel

Kaum noch Nullbock, viel Interesse an "zeitbezogener" Bibelarbeit und die Erkenntnis, dass auch junge Menschen ihren Beitrag zur Erhaltung der Schöpfung leisten müssen, bestimmen in jünster Zeit verstärkt die Arbeit der Evangelischen Jugend. Als ein Indiz für diesen "erstaunlichen Positivtrend" nannte Landesjugendpastor Bernd Haasler die erheblich angestiegene Mitgliederzahl. Danach arbeiten in der Ev. Jugendarbeit in Schleswig-Holstein und Hamburg inzwischen etwa 93.000 junge Leute mit.

In einer vom Nordelbischen Jugendpfarramt auf dem Koppelsberg bei Plön verbreiteten Uebersicht stellt der Jugendpastor Zuversicht und Einsatzfreude bei den Mitgliedern fest. Das Bemühen, sich aktiv den bedrängenden Themen wie Hochrüstung und technologischer Verplanung der Menschen zuzuwenden, komme "von unten" aus der Basis. Staat, Parteien und die Amtskirche würden bisher dabei bei jungen Menschen wenig als Träger der Hoffnung gelten, schreibt Haasler.

Vor allem die Bibel spielt in der Evangelischen Jugend, die nach Angaben des Jugendpastors in den vergangenen drei Jahrzehnten ihren Mitgliederbestand fast verdreifachte, eine grössere Rolle "als es manche Kritiker wahrhaben wollen". Allerdings werde heute nicht mehr die blosse Kenntnis des Bibelinhalts angestrebt, sondern Themen und Erzählungen würden danach ausgewählt, ob sie zu den Interessen und Erfahrungen der Jugendlichen passen. Gebräuchlich sei auch der öffentliche Umgang mit biblischen Kurzworten wie "Schwerter zu Pflugscharen", "Liebet Eure Feinde" oder "Jesus liebt Dich" geworden.

News in Brief contd.

BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND - (epd)

Wolfenbüttel - Etwa 1.500 Teilnehmer werden zu einem evangelischen Landesjugendtreffen erwartet, das vom 13. bis 15. Juni vom Amt für Jugendarbeit der Braunschweiger Landeskirche in Wolfenbüttel veranstaltet wird. Diese seit 1980 wieder alle zwei Jahre stattfindende Begegnung steht nach Angaben von Landesjugendpfarrer Wilfried Steen unter dem Motto "In Sorge... und dennoch". Wie Steen ausführte, geht dabei vor allem darum, den Jugnedlichen Mut zum Leben zu machen. So stehen nach dem Programm die Werkstattbereiche der Zusammenkunft unter den drei Hauptthemen "Frieden und Gerechtigkeit", "Liebe" und "Freiheit". Ausserdem ist ein grosses gemeinsames Fest der Teilnehmer unter dem Thema "Wir setzen Lebenszeichen" beabsichtigt.

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BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND - (epd)

"Jugend hat nur wenig Interesse an der Kirche"

Dannenberg - Junge Frauen und Männer im Alter zwischen 19 und 24 Jahren haben in ihrer Mehrheit nur wenig Interesse an der Kirche, bezeichnen ihren früheren Konfirmandenunterricht aus der Erinnerung als "langweilig" und würden es besser finden, wenn die Kirche nicht über die Steuer, sondern durch freiwillige Spenden finanziert würde. Dies sind Ergebnisse der Befragung eines repräsentativen Bevölkerungsquerschnitts im Bereich der Samtgemeinde Dannenberg, die jetzt von Schülern des Fritz-Reuter-Gymnasiums in Dannenberg vorgelegt wurden.

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CANADA - excerpt from Lutheran Student Movement in Canada, News Release

Plans are well underway for this year's national conference in Victoria to be held during the last week of August. The theme this year is Community, Commute, Commune, Communication and ties in with the EXPO's theme of Man in Motion. One day of the conference will be spent in joint conference with the LSM alumni who are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of LSMC this year with a reunion, also in Victoria. Both of these conferences should prove to be a lot of fun. They are always a time to renew old friendships and make new ones and to spend time together in worship, study, fellowship and fun.

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DEUTSCHE DEMOKRATISCHE REPUBLIK (DDR) - (epd)

Berlin - Die Jugendarbeit der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR erreicht gegenwärtig im Höchstfall vier Prozent aller Jugendlichen des Landes.

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Gesprächsthemen ihrer Treffen sind neben Grundfragen des christlichen Glaubens Probleme der Auseinandersetzung mit Eltern und Vorgesetzten sowie der Gestaltung von Partnerschaft und Sexualität. Zur Sprache kommen immer wieder auch Identitäts- und Sinnfragen, die Suche nach beruflichen Perspektiven und einer eigenen Lebenskultur sowie die Schwierigkeiten, sich für mehr Frieden, Gerechtigkeit und die Bewahrung der Schöpfung einzusetzten.

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ETHIOPIA - Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus SCS, from a letter of the youth secretary to our Desk

Easter Camp Program - This time is really a blessing for us and for our church. Some weeks ago we had an Easter camp program which was arranged in six of our districts to share the word of God for non-believers and to strengthen our Christian youth in their witness. The meeting lasted for four days and at this occasion around 5,000 youth were gathered to share the word of God and their experiences. The theme of the camp was: "He who has the son has life; he who has not the son of God has no life", 1.John 5:12.

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FINLAND

MYSTERY IN FELLOWSHIP Youth Event

A Christian Youth Event will be arranged in Turku-Abo, Finland in August 1986 by the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Mission together with the local Evangelical Lutheran congregations in Turku. This Youth Event is intended for students and young working people. They will be challenged to discuss and consider what it means to be a professing Christian and what is commitment and struggle of faith. The theme and primary focus of the event, "Mystery in Fellowship", will be on worship service, but during times of celebration opportunity to look at various aspects of mission will be provided in the optional seminars, as well as practical avenues of service in the workshops. Main speakers will be Dr. Choong Chee Pang from Singapore and Richard Lui, an evangelist from Hong Kong. Other participants will include missionaries and gospel musicians.

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JAPAN (from a circular letter of Japan Lutheran Missionaries Association)

From here to eternity

It is a common assumption, perhaps reinforced by the not infrequent spectacle of deathbed conversions, that a looming tomb has the same effect on

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the nonreligious as a foxhole. Not so in Japan. 42.1% of those queried in a national survey denied the existence of an afterlife, with the percentage of pooh-poohers being largest among those closest to eternity - the elderly. By contrast, over 70% of women in their 20s believe in a world beyond this one. The up-and-down quality of life in the big cities serves to impress upon residents the likelihood of there being both a heaven and a hell - in Tokyo live one-and-a-half times as many believers as non-believers; in Osaka, one-and-two-thirds times as many. Belief in an afterlife decreases as age increases from 30 to 50, after which women begin to see the light (or the fires). If there is a heaven, notes one wag, most of the Japanese there will be middle-aged women and their daughters.

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MEXICO

The World Student Christian Federation's XXIX quadrennial Assembly was held in Mexico City, March 12 - 24, 1986. 250 delegates (70 of them with voting rights) participated in the loaded program. The LWF was represented by Rev. James Carr, Director of the National Lutheran Campus Ministries in the USA. According to his report "the assembly had a task of electing new officers and staff, reviewing the program of the last quadrenium. The Federation has a praxis of spending the first few days educating the attendees with heavy dosis of lecture. The content of these presentations, held at the university of Mexico, was saturated with political-economic and social analysis under the assumption that there is only one realistic theology for today. That theology is liberation theology - Latin American version.." A featured speaker at the assembly was Fernando Cardenal, Nicaraguan Minister of Education, who is a Roman Catholic priest. In spite of the different critical observations, the LWF representative advocates that the Lutheran Churches in the USA continue to support the WSCF because of the clear mutual benefit of their involvement in the Federation.

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THE NETHERLANDS - Congress Briefing

MISSION'87 - Unique in Europe

The 4th missionary congress for European young people will be held from December 27, 1986 till January 1, 1987 in Utrecht, Holland (former congresses were in Lusanne, Switzerland). This is the first time this location has been chosen to encourage the North European young people to attend. The central theme of MISSION'87 is: 'I chose you', Jesus Christ. It will be worked out in a program of large meetings and seminars on various subjects, such as prayer, music, etc. 10.000 participants can be expected.

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SOUTH AFRICA (Die Stiebeuel, Youth Magazine of ELCSA, No. 1, 1986)

Press Statement: Western Cape

We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

During this time of Lent we are reminded of the life, suffering and death of our Lord; and our prayer is that this may move us toward true discipleship. In these days our discipleship and mission as a church has been challenged by the government. Our Pastor, Gottfried Kraatz, has been denied renewal of his work and residence permit. We perceive this refusal as being directed not against him as a person, but at the Church. We are bound to what Peter, the Rock of the Church, says in Acts 5:21, "We must obey God rather than men."

We cannot tolerate the interference of the state or anybody else in the ministry and life of the church. The mission of the church supercedes the interest of the state. We understand that our mission is to proclaim the Gospel in all aspects of life, and not to be limited by any state definition of what the church's task is. The time has now come for us to jointly stand up for the truth of the Gospel and no longer remain silent onlookers but take our rightful place in the life of our society.

The Dean and the pastors of the Western Cape Circuit had joint service to prayerfully respond for this challenge to the church.

Thankful for your partnership in the Gospel,
The Dean and Pastors of the Western Cape Circuit,
Cape Orange Diocese,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

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SOUTH AFRICA - "Informationen Über Weltkonflikte"

In February 1986 "Informationen Über Weltkonflikte" (Information on World Conflicts) published an article entitled "Apartheid: Children behind bars". This article contained a quotation from a letter to the South African newspaper "The Star", written in December last year: "Give the children a Christmas gift, open up their prison cells." This letter expressed a vehement appeal to the Government to release all children who were detained under the present State of Emergency in South Africa. Since the State of Emergency was declared in July 1985 about 6000 persons have been arrested, most of whom were released after a short period of time. About 60% of these 6000 were under the age of 25, some of them children of seven or eight years who were detained for weeks on end without contacts to either parents or lawyers. Some of they were even severely brutalized.

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SWEDEN - from Swedish newspaper "Lutherhjälpen" (Lutheraid)

The students in a suburban school of Stockholm, Sweden have started a collection campaign to honour the memory of Olof Palme (Swedish Prime Minister who was murdered in February this year) and his work towards peace and freedom. The money collected will go through Lutherhjälpen (Swedish National Committee of the LWF) to the Oshigambo High School in Namibia. This school is one of the few in Namibia where black students can obtain secondary and high school education. So far the school children have collected a sum of Sw.crowns 13,600 and money still keeps being paid into their special bank account, which they have named "Pease and Freedom through Lutherhjälpen".

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SCHWEIZ - (Tages-Anzeiger, 22.4.86)

Bern - Rund 60 Vertreter nationaler Jugendgruppen aus Ost- und Westeuropa haben sich während vier Tagen in Bern mit Fragen des Jugendaustausches und -tourismus befasst. Der europäische Jugendrat verabschiedete mehrere Forderungen für einen Jugendaustausch über die Landesgrenzen hinweg. Die Teilnehmerstaaten des KSZE-Expertentreffens werden aufgefordet, Austauschprogramme durch bilaterale Kulturabkommen zu fördern, spezialisierte Programme für junge Wissenschafter, Landwirte oder Musiker durchzuführen, Reiseeinschränkungen wie Visa- oder Umtauschpflicht abzubauen und beispielsweise das Interrail-Netz auszudehnen.

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TAIZE - Internationalen Rat des Miteindanderteilens

Mag die Welt an leuchtenden, selbstlosen Vorbildern insgesamt auch arm sein, dennoch gibt es sie. Neben Mutter Teresa gehört ohne Zweifel Frère Roger Schutz, der Prior der ökumenischen Gemeinschaft von Taizé, dazu. Der heute Siebzigjährige bemüht sich vor allem um die jungen Menschen. Ihnen will er Glauben und Hoffnung geben, ihnen will er zeigen, dass es auf Erden um mehr geht als um Fortschritt und Fortkommen.

Wie Frère Roger zum Abschluss des 8. Europäischen Jugendtreffens ankündigte, will die ökumenische Bruderschaft einen "Internationalen Rat der Miteinanderteilens" schaffen, der den ärmsten Ländern in der Dritten Welt helfen soll. "Wo die Menschheitsfamilie starken Spannungen ausgesetzt ist, wo bittere Armut und der persönliche Reichtum einzelner einander krass gegenüberstehen und wo die Bevölkerung einiger Länder so stark wächst wie etwa in Indien um zwanzig Millionen pro Jahr, dort ist ein Miteinanderteilen der materiellen und kulturellen Güter unerlässlich," forderte Frère Roger.

Der Rat soll seine Arbeit im Herbst 1987 aufnehmen, bis dahin werden Sekretariate eingerichtet, und zwar für Asien in Bombay, für Afrika in Kinshasa, für Europa möglichst in Warschau, für Lateinamerika in Caracas,

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für Nordamerika in New York und für Australien in Melbourne. Der International Rat soll nach dem Prior von Taizé weder Geschenke noch Spenden für sich selbst annehmen, sondern er werde aufzeigen, was es an vertrauenswürdigen Initiativen und Projekte bereits gibt, die unterstützt werden können. Unkosten werden nicht aus Spendengeldern gedeckt.

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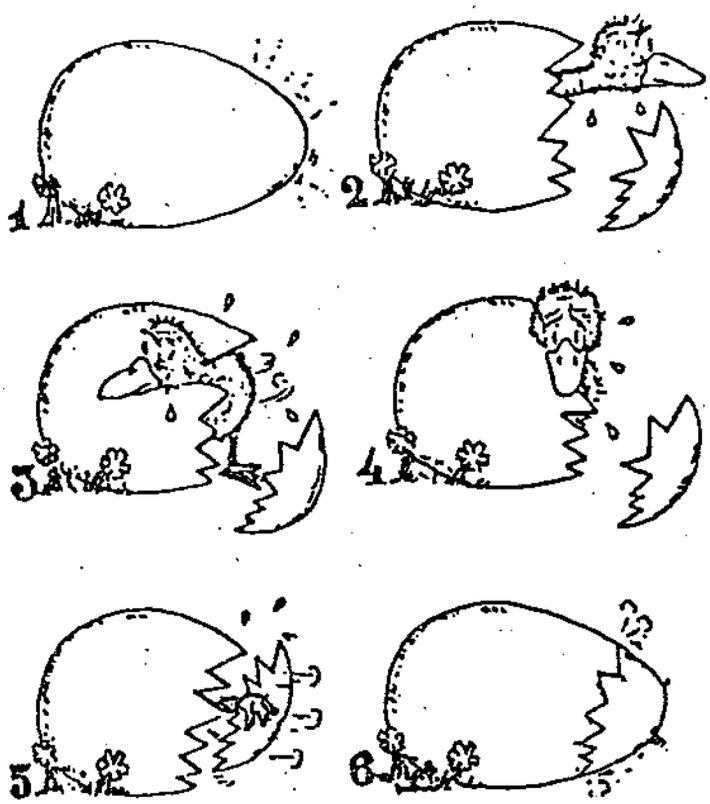
UNESCO

to the International Youth Year 1985 on education

International Youth Year 1985, proved most revealing. While learning about and from youth, educators discovered some startling gaps in current schooling. Young people find today's schooling largely irrelevant to their needs and preoccupations. Most education occurs outside the classroom in "real life". Insights into youth's non-formal learning may enable teachers to make significant improvements in academic education. These findings from International Youth Year are developed in a recent issue of the Unesco Institute of Education's International Review of Education. Entitled "Youth, Education and Social Development", this special issue draws on the ideas and experience of pioneers in youth research and programs. (UNESCO Institute for Education, Feldbrunnenstrasse 58, 2000 Hamburg 13, Federal Republic of Germany.)



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UNITED NATIONS - Population newsletter

The majority of the world's population: Children and Youth

Children and youth combined make up more than half of today's world population. Recognizing the importance of children and youth as part of the total population and the vital roles they play in the development process, the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) of the United Nations Secretariat recently carried

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out a study examining the two groups. The results of the study are presented in the Selected Demographic and Social Characteristics of the World's Children and Youth.

In 1985, the number of children (persons under 15 years of age) in the world is estimated to be 1.6 billion, or 34% of the world's population; the number of youth (persons aged between 15 and 24) is estimated to be 940 million, or 19% of the world's total population. The groups together constitute more than half of the world's population. It is projected that by the year 2000 the child and youth populations will further increase to 1.9 billion and 1.1 billion, respectively.

The estimated growth differentials between more developed and less developed regions for the child and youth populations for the period 1970-1985 are projected to continue through the year 2000. As a result, 98% of the projected growth of the child population in the world between 1985 and 2000 will take place in the less developed regions. The entire increase in the world's youth is likely to take place in the less developed regions, with youth in the more developed regions beginning to diminish in absolute numbers at an annual rate of -0.4%. Hence, by the year 2000, between 8 and 9 out of every 10 persons under age 25 in the world will be living in less developed countries.

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UNITED NATIONS/UNFPA

The state of the world's population report

The 1986 State of the World's Population Report published by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) was released by Mr. Rafel Salas, Executive Director of the Fund, in Scandinavian capitals, ie Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm, this month. According to the Report, urban dwellers, which already comprise 40% of the world population, will almost double between the years 1970 and 2025. The majority of this urban growth has and will continue to occur in developing countries. For example, Mexico City, the world's largest city with a poulation of 18.1 million people, will have a population of 26.3 million by the turn of the century. At this time, the 20 largest cities will, with the exception of three, all be in the developing world.

USA

Lutheran Student Movement (LSM) 17th Annual National Assembly will be held on August 11-16, 1986. This summer students will gather at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, N.C. to study a theme of Spirituality based on John 4:24: "God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." The theme presentor, Rev. Paul Bosch of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, will focus on Spiritual Exercises such as prayer (private and corporate), meditation, journal keeping, confession, and the Eucharist. Students will be able to develop concrete ways to apply spirituality in their daily lives.